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ABSTRACT

A study (part of the New Zealand Writing Project) investigated how teachers respond effectively to their students' writing. Several related issues were investigated, including whether "good" teachers of writing at various levels differ in approach and techniques used, and which practices bring about improvement at different ages. Twenty-four teachers (approximately five each from five grades across primary and secondary levels) chosen through a several-stage selection process were closely observed in action over a school term, and transcripts, school schemes, observation notes, and samples of writing were collected. All classroom activity from the initiation of a writing task through to its completion, including teacher feedback on the final written outcome, was observed. Data were analyzed into the following categories: (1) teachers' views of or approaches to writing; (2) classroom management; (3) the writing process; (4) conferencing techniques; (5) publication; (6) evaluation; and (7) assistance and intervention. Results organized according to these categories are discussed in detail for each of the five primary or secondary levels studied. It is concluded that all the teachers shared a considerable similarity in emphasis in the positive way they responded to their pupil's writing, but that further research is needed, particularly on the problems that occur in relation to the teaching and learning of writing when pupils transfer from teacher to teacher, from class to class, from school to school, and from one sector of the education system to another. Seventeen references are dispersed throughout the report. Eight appendixes include interview questions, background information and questionnaire, classroom observation guide, student observation record, supplementary questions for classroom observation guide, additional items of information for participants, summary sheet, and a list of teachers observed. (SR)

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RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY TO PUPILS' WRITING

Anne O'Rourke
David Philips

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Anne O'Rourke

David Philips

This report is in fulfilment of a research contract with the Department of Education.

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CHAPTER ONE: ORIGINS OF THE STUDY

In July 1987, the Hon. C. R. Marshall, Minister of Education at that time, approved the expenditure of \$90,000 for a New Zealand Writing Project. The New Zealand Writing Project aimed to improve the written expression of students in primary and secondary schools, as well as tertiary institutions, through a programme of research and teacher development. This sum was approved for two purposes: firstly, to fund teacher release days and associated travel and accommodation costs in order to train a group of resource teachers of writing, who would work as consultants in schools and tertiary institutions to improve standards of written expression of primary, secondary and tertiary students, and secondly, to fund a research project to be carried out by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research into the identification of effective classroom intervention strategies and methods of teaching writing which would improve the teaching and learning of written expression.

The project described in this research report meets the second purpose of the New Zealand Writing Project funding. The specific issue investigated - how teachers effectively respond to their pupils' writing - arose from two sources: previous research conducted by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), and needs expressed by participants of national in-service courses on writing.

The studies of writing undertaken over the past five years by the Department of Education and NZCER¹ had consistently revealed that many teachers lacked sufficient knowledge for responding sensitively to their pupils' writing. Little information has been readily available on developmental trends in the learning of writing, or formative methods of assessment to assist pupils in improving their writing during the year.² It became apparent that research focussing specifically upon teacher response to writing would serve a useful role. Secondly, as part of the New Zealand Writing Project developments, it became clear that overseas research on writing³ did not always address issues of prime concern to New Zealand writing teachers, such as how to respond

appropriately to the needs of children from varying cultural backgrounds. Participants in the New Zealand Writing Projects, as well as consultants brought to New Zealand under the auspices of the NZ-US Educational Foundation, considered that research on New Zealand teachers who were already following sound procedures could well yield useful in-service material and information that could be disseminated through the local courses making up the New Zealand Writing Project⁴.

As a result, a research proposal accompanied requests to the Minister of Education for funds to launch the NZWP. Earlier, too, as part of NZCER's attempts to establish a programme of research on writing a lengthy discussion document had been prepared in which various aspects of the teaching, learning and evaluation of writing were targeted for attention, and it was felt that the research study proposed as part of the NZWP was a useful first step, in the absence of funding for the new research programme, in establishing writing research as a continuing field of study.

The research project began in May 1988 after discussion as to the most appropriate focus for the research involving officers from the Department of Education's Curriculum Development Division and the Research and Statistics Division, as well as David Philips from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Also, early in March 1988, the participants of the IEA Written Composition Report National Course held in Christchurch drew up a list of topics concerning the teaching and learning of writing which they considered sufficiently important to require research, and these were ranked in order of priority. The issue which most teachers put in first place was 'Which type of teacher responses assist writing development?' Other issues which several teachers agreed upon were 'What is the relationship between oral and written contributions in class?', 'What ways are used by teachers to assess and grade writing?' and 'When are teacher interventions most appropriate?' Accordingly, the group meeting periodically during the early months of 1988 decided to undertake a research project entitled 'Responding Effectively to Pupils' Writing' which would address these issues, and in particular how teachers responded to pupils' writing.

The main question which the study set out to answer, at least in part, was 'In what ways do 'good' teachers of writing respond to their pupils' writing?' or, to put it another way, 'How do effective writing teachers encourage their pupils to write?'

Related issues investigated were:

- do 'good' teachers of writing at different levels (for example, junior school, middle standards, intermediate, lower secondary and upper secondary) use similar responding techniques?
- in what ways do 'good' teachers of writing at various levels differ in the approaches adopted and techniques used?
- which practices used for teaching writing bring about improvement?
- which techniques of response appear to be the most influential in improving student writing (i.e., assisting writing development) at different ages?
- how do 'good' teachers of writing assess or evaluate their pupils' writing, and what kinds of feedback are offered?
- at what points in the writing process do 'good' writing teachers assist their students or intervene?
- why do 'good' writing teachers use the strategies they do adopt?

A qualitative approach was followed as the techniques of participant-observation and the use of case studies were seen as more appropriate for investigating the teaching of writing than survey techniques such as questionnaires or the analysis of pupil performance on writing exercises.

Dr Anne O'Rourke was approached to undertake the fieldwork for the study with David Philips as overall co-ordinator, providing assistance and support as required. During Term Two over 60 primary and secondary teachers who were considered to be effective teachers of writing were interviewed, and the final sample of 24* was closely observed in action in the classroom during Term Three. The data obtained (transcripts, school schemes, observation notes and samples of writing) were analyzed early in 1989 and a report jointly prepared by the authors in March and April for the Department of Education.

*Originally 25, but one sixth form teacher became unavailable at a time when it was impossible to observe a replacement.

As far as can be determined, this study is the first serious attempt at investigating in the context of the classroom productive approaches towards the teaching of writing employed by both primary and secondary teachers. This report, therefore, is a valuable in-service document in its own right as a comprehensive account of practices adopted in New Zealand primary and secondary schools to foster the development of writing through responsive teaching and evaluation strategies. It will be followed by a range of writing resources building upon the positive supportive techniques observed in conducting the research.

References

1. For example: Philips, D. *A Month's Writing in Four Classrooms*, Wellington: NZCER, 1985 and Lamb, H. *Writing Performance in New Zealand Schools: A Report on the IEA Study of Written Composition in New Zealand*, Wellington: Department of Education, 1987.
2. These themes are explored in detail in Philips, D. *Towards a New Approach for Assessing the Teaching and Learning of Writing in Schools: Proposals for Research and Resource Development*, Wellington: NZCER, 1989. See also: Philips, D. 'Trends and Issues in Recent British Research on Writing' in: *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 21, 2, 206-211.
3. For example: Graves, D. *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*, Exeter, N.H.: Heinemann, 1983; Beard, R. *Children's Writing in the Primary School*, London: Hodder and Stoughton with UKRA, 1984.
4. See Catherwood, V. 'New Strategies in Education: Teaching Writing' in: *English in Aotearoa*, 7, 1989, 12-19, for an account of the origins and development of the New Zealand Writing Project.

CHAPTER TWO: UNDERTAKING THE RESEARCH

'Responding Effectively to Pupils' Writing' was designed as a participant-observation study, using qualitative research methods. The focus of the research and the specific questions to be investigated were determined as a result of several meetings involving officers from the Curriculum Development Division of the Department of Education, participants of national in-service writing courses, David Philips of NZCER and a visiting Fulbright Scholar (Writing), Dr Ruie Pritchard from North Carolina State University, Raleigh. By mid-April 1988 the issues had been sufficiently refined to allow the study to begin formally.

Defining the focus

An initial task was to define just what was intended by the term 'responding'. For the purposes of this study, a broad definition was adopted. Generally speaking, any response made by a teacher to any aspect of a pupil's writing (including talking about the nature of writing, commenting upon the text itself or discussing topics and ideas with the class of which the pupil is a member, etc.) is considered to be a form of 'response'; thus the term 'responding' includes both those kinds of specific techniques which a teacher might apply in the class when interacting with the writer at any stage of the act of writing from the soliciting of ideas through to the giving of formal feedback after the completion of a piece of writing, and all the stages in between, as well as the teacher's creation and maintenance of a suitable environment (e.g., physical organisation of the classroom, interpersonal relationships, resources available, number of private areas, etc.) in which to foster the development of writing. Finally, 'responding' also includes the intellectual environment provided by the teacher even before writing is used or taught (and throughout the act of teaching), i.e., those assumptions held by the teacher about the nature of writing, their own writing practices and their views about the most appropriate ways to encourage their pupils' writing development whatever the pupils' personality or cultural background.

Effective responses are taken to be those which are conducive to the development of pupils' writing; what is effective, i.e., works well, for one teacher may not be effective for another, what is effective for one pupil may not be effective for another.

In normal circumstances, patterns of response common to the teachers studied will receive more attention, simply in order to reduce the likelihood of idiosyncratic practices being interpreted as effective because they work for one teacher, when no evidence is provided for their being effective for any other teacher in the study.

The kinds of writing studied are those which were in use or being taught at the time the observer was present in the classroom, and range from the expressive through to the formal. Although different kinds of writing were observed at each level, a view adopted throughout this study is that, generally, techniques which appear to be effective in responding to one kind of writing, are more than likely to be effective for other kinds of writing as well.

Selecting the sample

Before the fieldwork began, a procedure for identifying 'good' teachers of writing was established. Given that, in an absolute sense, it is highly unlikely that anyone really knows who the best teachers of writing are in New Zealand, a multi-tier strategy was adopted in order to select an appropriate sample of 'good' writing teachers and to minimize the effects of different sources of bias (e.g., subjective comment, rumour, evidence based solely upon a single measure of index, etc.) While the IEA: Study of Written Composition provided some clues regarding the characteristics of teachers who had high achievers in their classes, its design was of little help as an indication of the effectiveness of teachers with low achieving children. The most appropriate measure for judging effectiveness through specific outcomes (e.g., measurable, qualitative changes in writing performance over a specified period of time) would be an index of writing growth (i.e., pupil's development in writing) covering, say, a one year span, but such a measure remains to be devised; perhaps not unsurprisingly it is highly unlikely that such measures will ever be created since growth in writing is not a simple linear process, with incremental gains occurring at defineable intervals, which can be easily measured by quantitative indices.¹

The stages involved in the selection of the sample were as follows:

- (1) The initial sample, of approximately 100 teachers from throughout New Zealand, was derived from consultation with a broad range of experts in the field of English teaching at the secondary level, and language teaching at the primary level. School inspectors, participants on national writing courses and principals (all of whom were very co-operative), were asked to recommend teachers that they considered to be 'good' teachers of writing. Evidence for their choices was required. Given that adequate indicators of writing teaching effectiveness based upon performance statistics taking into account differences in pupil ability are not available, that the time available for carrying out the study was limited, and hence that a relatively small sample of teachers only could be observed, this was viewed as an essential first screen, and preferable to asking teachers to nominate themselves or choosing candidates from the results of a large postal survey with a writing questionnaire.
- (2) The list obtained was refined to exclude those primary teachers not teaching at Standard One or Four, or Form Two, and secondary teachers without a Form Four or Six class in 1968. Teachers in the more remote part of the South Island, in particular (e.g., Southland or Central Otago) were excluded on the grounds of cost. In addition, if a name was mentioned by only one educator, it was removed from the list. Although it is possible that several very effective teachers were omitted in this way, we preferred to include teachers mentioned by at least two 'referees' as an additional form of validation. This reduced the sample to approximately 65 teachers.
- (3) These 65 teachers largely from the urban centres of Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin, with the odd teacher from Hastings, Levin and Picton were interviewed by Anne O'Rourke, although if a conflict of availability occurred David Philips also undertook the occasional interview. The interviews were taped and transcribed. The resulting 800 pages of transcripts in themselves are a valuable source of data on the teaching of writing in New Zealand primary and secondary schools. In each case, a standard format was followed in conducting the interviews, which lasted from 40 minutes to an hour. The 20 questions with additional lead-in topics are included as Appendix A. The key questions were as follows:
 - i. As a teacher of English, what place does writing have in your total programme?

- ii. How do you go about teaching writing in your class at the ... level?
- iii. Please describe a 'typical' writing lesson in your classroom.
- iv. Do your pupils ever ask for any reasons why they have certain written tasks?
- v. Where do you get your ideas from for teaching writing or for new activities to try out, etc.?
- vi. Do you write yourself?
- vii. At what points in the writing process do you consider your involvement (intervention? interaction?) to be most appropriate/helpful for your pupils?
- viii. How do you interact with your pupils when they are writing?
- ix. What opportunities do your pupils have to confer with each other about their written work?
- x. Who reads your pupils' writing?
- xi. Do your pupils have explicit information on the criteria used for grading/marking?
- xii. When your pupils are engaged in a writing activity do they know how to monitor their own writing process?
- xiii. How do you evaluate your pupils' written work?
- xiv. Do pupils ever set their own standards of evaluation for some tasks?
- xv. Do you make written/oral comments on pieces of writing that are not graded/marked, etc.?
- xvi. What happens in your class if pupils don't perform well (for whatever reason)?
- xvii. Do you teach grammar/usage/accuracy of language, in any fashion?
- xviii. What strategies do you adopt to deal with students who dislike writing or find writing hard/boring, etc.?
- xix. In your view, what are the most important features/characteristics of a good/effective teacher of writing?
- xx. Is there anything else you would like to mention about how you teach writing, or how writing should be taught, or ways of responding to pupils' writing?

On the whole, the teachers interviewed were willing participants, and apart from the occasional bout of anxiety, were very forthcoming about their teaching practices.

Each teacher was also asked to fill in a brief questionnaire providing background information and items covering the types of writing covered

in class and the teaching techniques used. The questionnaire, which was adopted from one used in the Bay Area Writing Project in the United States, is included as Appendix B. This was to be forwarded to Anne O'Rourke along with samples of writing from three pupils in their class of varying ability levels; this was done with the intention of gathering direct evidence of the kinds of strengths and weaknesses each teacher considered present in their pupils' writing.

- (4) Once all the information in (3) had been gathered (despite the occasional gap, although follow-up letters were sent out to tardy interviewees) a sample of 25 teachers was chosen for observation based upon interview comments, and features observed in the pupils' writing and the questionnaire responses. Specifically, teachers were chosen who demonstrated most of these traits:
- i. A positive, encouraging and affirming response to children's language and writing.
 - ii. Knowledge, experience and practice of the processes involved in writing (e.g., as described by Donald Graves, though not exclusively), and awareness of the function of teacher response in that process.
 - iii. Awareness to such difference as reflected in the development of children's writing.
 - iv. Recognition and acceptance of, and respect for cultural difference and the realisation of its significance, in determining culturally appropriate responses to children's writing.
 - v. Evidence in the children's writing of the teacher's positive, affirmative role in relation to the process of writing.
 - vi. Realisation of the personal nature of writing and ability to provide programmes that respond to the child's personal 'voice' and develop both confidence and competence in writing.
 - vii. Knowledge of the different genres in writing and provision of opportunities for children to write for different purposes and audiences, and to use different registers.
 - viii. Willingness to adapt and to experiment with new ideas and to develop different strategies in relation to the writing process.
 - ix. Evaluation modes supportive of individual needs in the children's writing.
 - x. A classroom environment reflective of the writing process, e.g., stimulating 'starter' material, display of children's writing, reading resources, pair and group activities, etc.

Additional criteria used to determine the final selection were type of school (e.g., cultural mix, socio-economic setting, coeducational or single sex, urban or provincial, size and organisation), so that a balance of schools was included with a reasonable approximation to national representativeness, and teacher variables such as gender, age, experience, position and principal's support.

For all teachers chosen an outline was prepared describing personal characteristics and the features of the school in which they taught, as well as a teaching profile describing key elements of their approaches towards the teaching of writing, major emphases and important beliefs about their role. Five teachers were chosen from each of five levels: J3/Standard One, Standard Four, Form Two, Form Four and Form Six. These levels were chosen to provide a reasonably accurate indication of changes of emphasis in the teaching of writing across the primary and secondary school, with approximately two-year intervals.

The schools were in the following districts:

Table One: Location of Schools with Participating Teachers (By level)

Location	J3/S1	S4	F2	F4	F6
Auckland	2	1	1	2	3
Wellington	2	2	1	2	-
Dunedin	1	1	2	1	1
Other	-	1	1	-	-

No attempt was made to balance levels across regions simply because of the very small numbers involved in the sample at each level (i.e., five, and four at Form Six). The main aim was to ensure that the teachers finally selected, apart from their suitability as effective teachers of writing, came from various parts of New Zealand and not from a single city (e.g., Wellington or Auckland), and taught pupils who in most cases came from a variety of cultural backgrounds (this was true even of the Dunedin schools in the study).

Observing classroom practice

Once the final sample had been selected, an itinerary was prepared to allow observations to be made of each teacher while teaching writing in their own classroom. Trips to centres apart from Wellington were arranged as economically as possible; thus, often it was necessary for more than one teacher to be observed on any given day. As most primary teachers timetabled writing for

particular slots during the week, and as the secondary sample without exception was timetabled into regular English periods, it was relatively easy to organize such a complementary approach to the observation phase of the study. The observations were carried out towards the last part of Term Two and throughout Term Three, 1988, and apart from one teacher all of the 25 teachers chosen were observed. It was not possible to include a substitute teacher as the Form Six classes available were preparing for internal examinations and extra-curricular activities, once it was known that the selected teacher could not be included.

Fundamentally, the observational approach used required the researcher to sit in the classroom, to all intents and purposes as a participant (though not in the sense of contributing to the discussion or sharing in writing activities) with the intention of observing and recording as unobtrusively as possible the teacher-pupil interactions which took place during the writing 'sessions' observed. These 'sessions' (i.e., phases of instruction with a defineable written outcome) varied in length from 40-45 minutes or a single English period at the secondary level, to, on some occasions, larger blocks of time such as two hours at the primary level. Most of the secondary teachers were observed for three or four consecutive periods, while the primary teachers were observed on successive 'writing' days for a total of several hours in each case. As the focus of the study was 'teacher response to pupils' writing', all classroom activity from the initiation of a writing task through to its completion (when possible), including teacher feedback on the final written outcome, was observed.

Observation notes were recorded on a specially designed Classroom Observation Guide (see Appendix C) covering topics such as getting started (i.e., classroom organisation, types of writing, purpose and objectives, stimulation and motivation, modelling and examples), the process of writing (student activities such as sharing ideas, drafting, conferencing, proofreading and editing, publishing and the teacher's role in responding to each of these), aspects of writing emphasized (e.g., ideas, language, organisation, etc.), and responding (monitoring, and assessment criteria and methods). Each separate occasion a teacher was observed, one of these sheets was filled in. In addition, when time permitted, notes were made on up to three pupils in each class using a Student Observation Record (see Appendix D). Notes to assist in focussing the observations were also prepared (see Appendix E). Finally, any information which might have a bearing on the teaching of writing in each school where a teacher was observed was collected (see Appendix F), including periodic discussions with principals or other teachers.

All in all, during this phase of the project several thousand pages of notes, summary sheets, school schemes, teaching documents, and samples of pupils' writing were collected and stored at NZCER for subsequent analysis. In their own right, these items are a useful database for exploring aspects of the teaching of writing which could not be adequately covered in this research report.

Analysis of the data

A two-tier approach was taken towards the analysis of the data. Initially, using a specially devised summary sheet (see Appendix G) all the observations relating to a particular teacher were boiled down into eight categories (i.e., responding techniques used, practices avoided, response techniques used, practices avoided, response techniques influential in improving student writing, use of formal assessment, points at which assistance is given or intervention made, reasons for using specific strategies, students' views of the teacher's behaviour and other comments significant to the research). These sheets were added to the notes, etc., already obtained.

During the next stage, all the materials gathered including the summary sheets were carefully sifted for each teacher, level by level, and using large sheets of paper (A5 size), ten for each level, all relevant pieces of information relating to specified categories were incorporated on large grids, with each box labelled for a particular aspect of the writing process or modes of response used by the teacher. The categories used, which were derived from the key aspects of teaching practice observed, are reflected in the structure of the individual chapters describing responding techniques for each of the observed levels, and were as follows:

1. teachers' views of or approaches to writing:
 - . general
 - . interpretation of the writing process
 - . strengths of the writing process
 - . concerns about the 'writing process' approach
2. classroom management:
 - . environment
 - . room layout
 - . seating/groupings
 - . student/teacher relationships
 - . student/student relationships

3. the writing process:
 - objectives
 - ideas/topics
 - pre-writing
 - modelling
 - drafting
 - proofreading
 - conferencing: roving, group, peer, individual
 - audience
 - sharing
 - editing for publication
 - format of published writing
4. feedback:
 - oral: pupils to each other
 - oral: teacher to the pupils
 - written: students to each other or the teacher
 - written: teacher on drafts
 - written: teacher on published writing
 - marks/grades
5. intervention or assistance:
 - stage
 - type
 - voice
 - ownership
 - spelling
 - punctuation
 - grammar
 - genres/forms
6. evaluation:
 - objectives
 - records
 - checklists

The resulting grids (50 pages of densely written information, in up to five columns per page) were used as the basis for the research report (see Chapters Four to Eight, for individual levels, and Chapter Nine for the overviews of primary teachers and secondary teachers).

Analysis of the data took place during December 1988 and January and February, 1989, while most of the research report was prepared in March, and typed during April and May, 1989.

Reference

1. See, for example, Philips, D. *Towards a New Approach for Assessing the the Teaching and Learning of Writing in Schools: Proposals for Research and Resource Development*, Wellington: NZCER, 1989.

CHAPTER THREE: OTHER STUDIES OF TEACHER RESPONSE TO PUPILS' WRITING

Research on writing is a comparatively recent phenomenon, and while a number of overseas studies have examined the specific issue of how teachers respond to their pupils' writing¹ this aspect has received very little attention in New Zealand apart from some theses² and, in passing, some studies carried out by NZCER³.

The report of New Zealand's participation in the IEA: Study of Written Composition⁴ was concerned more with the achievement of Form Two and Five students on set writing tasks, and although how the participating teachers taught writing, including feedback and evaluation, is discussed briefly, the implications for practising teachers and specific kinds of response are not explored in detail. Similarly, *A Month's Writing in Four Classrooms* was not concerned with teacher response, although the focus of the research allowed some conclusions to be made about the kinds of responses teachers were making to their pupils' writing. In general, the teachers observed set writing tasks with considerable discussion between the teachers and pupils before writing began, and assistance was offered when pupils requested it. But formal arrangements for conferencing were not used. In the primary classes, pupils shared their writing, although most tended to work individually, but in the secondary classes apart from reading out the occasional completed piece to the class, sharing was comparatively rare at any stage of the writing process. Also, pupils generally received little feedback on the quality of their writing. This study, however, was conducted before the renewed focus on aspects of the writing process, as popularised by Donald Graves⁵, had its full impact in New Zealand.

From the early 1980s Donald Graves and other writers who had undertaken what Hillocks⁶ calls 'natural process' research on writing explored the various stages involved in creating a piece of writing, and the strategies employed by pupils when engaged in writing tasks. Flower and Hayes⁷ undertook similar

research at the tertiary level, and their model of composing has now become the most influential among educators and teachers who undertake research on the teaching, learning and evaluation of writing. Consequently, in carrying out the research described in this report we used a similar framework for describing the different stages involved in the teaching of writing to that used by Graves, Flower and Hayes, and others, examining the teachers' responses to their pupils' writing at all stages of the process from settling upon a topic through to 'publication'. [Rather than explore their models of the writing process here, however, readers are invited to consult the references given at the end of this chapter.]

Their research has demonstrated that 'breakdowns' in the act of writing can occur at many different points, and that the responses made by teachers are a critical dimension of the acquisition and improvement of writing skills. Many other writers⁸ have explored this theme, too, and suggest that what has traditionally been associated with teacher response to writing, i.e., providing a comment or mark on a finished piece of writing, is barely adequate as an aid to writing development. The reasons for this point of view are explored in detail elsewhere⁹, and will not be recounted here.

In short, the techniques teachers of writing use in responding to their pupils' writing have become an increasingly significant focus of research. Evaluations of the effectiveness of different modes of response have been attempted, e.g., the use of peer groups¹⁰ and the nature and effects of different kinds of written comment¹¹, but more extensive research is needed before a comprehensive theory of teacher response to writing can be developed. We have not attempted to develop such a theory, but the model of responding implicit in the accounts of writing teaching at each of the five levels described in this report could well serve as a useful starting-point. To a large extent, therefore, we have decided to let the teachers observed speak for themselves through our account of their teaching strategies, and to acknowledge that additional research using carefully constructed investigative methods is required if the complex nature of teacher response to pupils' writing is to be unravelled.

References

1. See, for example, Anson, C.M. (Ed.) **Writing and Response: Theory, Practice and Research**, Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1989; Freedman, S.W. (Ed.) **The Acquisition of Written Language: Response and Revision**, Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1985 and Freedman, S.W. **Response to Student Writing**, Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1987.

2. Note, in particular, research by Helen Jerram (as reported in Jerram, H; Glynn, T. and Tuck, B. 'Responding to the Message: Providing a Social Context for Children Learning to Write', *Educational Psychology*, 8, 1988) and Belinda Logan, 'The Teacher as a Responsive Audience for Children's Written Language', University of Otago, Unpublished M.Ed. thesis, 1988.
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CHAPTER FOUR: WRITING IN THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF AND APPROACHES TOWARDS WRITING

I would like to think we have to look at basic principles with regard to writing as part of the total language framework ... apart from the fact that we have a specific writing time in the day, there would be many other times during the day as well when children write.

To me, writing and reading are interwoven and I use them both as part of an integrated programme ... I think that the children's own writing is a very important part of the reading programme ... I encourage the children to read their own and each other's writing ... I see the development of young children's writing as being very closely allied to their development in reading ... We do a lot of co-operative writing in the class but we also do a lot of our own writing, and I think for children of all ages it is a very important way for them to express themselves and to learn about themselves and be able to tell about themselves, to have something to share.

These views reflect the practices observed in the classrooms of the five teachers selected for the final phase of the research. In their learning programmes writing is considered an integral part of children's total language development, and the acquisition of writing skills is seen as inseparable from the development of confidence in themselves as persons, and from the development of competence and confidence in both oral language and reading.

In their classroom practice, writing is viewed as a tool through which children can both fashion and express personal ideas and feelings, and convey factual information. Thus, while these teachers set aside a time each day specifically targeted towards the development of each child's personal writing, writing is also seen as a skill, a process, that is integrated into other areas of the curriculum programme in a holistic and integrated approach to learning.

In their approach to writing all five teachers place considerable emphasis on the process of writing rather than the written product. The essential stages of the process, as articulated during interviews with the teachers and as deduced from observation of their programmes in action, include choice of topic, pre-writing, modelling, drafting, conferencing, proofreading and publication.

1. Writing is seen as coming from within the individual child and, therefore, in the daily time set aside for writing, even when the teacher may have suggested a focus for the day's writing, the ultimate choice of topic and ideas for writing belong to the pupil.
2. Pre-writing activities, i.e., the sharing of ideas through talk, vocabulary extension, and language activities, are essential components of the writing process.
3. Modelling is a way of teaching the skills of writing, that enables children to see writing taking shape and meaning in front of them. Taught in this way, the conventions of writing, such as punctuation, are seen as practices used to make the meaning of the writing clearer to the reader, not as skills to be learnt in isolation.
4. Drafting is an important stage in the writing process and children are given daily opportunities for sustained, silent writing, in an atmosphere that is sufficiently flexible to allow freedom to the child who needs help, to seek it. The draft is the focus of the teacher's interactive response to the child's writing.
5. Conferencing, i.e., the teacher's dialogue with the child about the writing-in-process, is the principal means of facilitating the writing process. It is an opportunity for the child to talk about the writing with an interested, friendly, and supportive adult who will give help if requested to, and make suggestions that the child can accept or think about.

6. Proofreading, reviewing and revising are important aspects of the writing process because they 'demystify' the process and enable the child to see writing as something that has to be worked at and practised.
7. Publishing, in one form or another, is important for a variety of reasons: it reinforces such concepts as self-worth and ownership; it gives a purpose to the writing by emphasising to the writer the importance of audience; it clarifies for the child the link between writing and reading.

Just as their interpretation of writing and their classroom practices are very similar, so too are their views about what they consider to be the strengths of the process approach to writing. Viewing the process from the perspective of the child they see its strengths thus:

1. it is successful because children enjoy writing, are writing worthwhile material and share their writing with others;
2. it places value on the child's ideas, feelings and experiences and, in this way, makes writing important to the child as an individual;
3. the process approach to writing helps the child to understand that writing and reading are part of the same communication process.

Seen from the perspective of the teacher the strengths of the process are:

1. it enables the teacher to know the child as an individual;
2. it is particularly relevant to those for whom English is a second language and those who experience language learning difficulties, because it enables the teacher to focus on each individual's specific teaching needs;
3. it reinforces the realisation and understanding that the developmental stages of learning and the acquisition of language are not the same for every child in the classroom;

4. it can make an important contribution to the school's philosophy of respect for and acceptance of cultural difference, as well as its recognition and acknowledgement of the contribution that cultural heritage makes to both the individual and the community.

Nevertheless, all five teachers expressed some concerns relating to the writing process. In general these concerns are to do with the many misinterpretations and misunderstandings about the writing process that abound among teachers, many of whom see it as 'process writing', i.e., a specific methodology, rather than recognising that its processes are associated with and relevant to all forms of writing, whether these be the personal, expressive, creative forms of writing, or the factual, informative, analytical and interpretative forms associated with all areas of the curriculum.

Other areas of concern are:

1. the time-consuming nature of individual conferencing and the danger that, because of this, some teachers may not persevere with the process approach to writing;
2. the difficulties experienced by children whose previous experiences of learning, particularly with regard to writing, have not exposed them to or made them familiar with the processes associated with writing;
3. the maintenance, particularly among Maori and Pacific Islands children, of the cultural voice, discernible in oral language, but often lost in the transposition into the written mode. This is an area which, in the view of these teachers, needs serious investigation and research, to ensure that teachers become more aware of cultural difference, and of the links between thought, and oral and written language, and develop processes and strategies to free these children from the constraints that inhibit the emergence of cultural voice in their writing;
4. the pakeha domination of schooling, not in an overtly racist way but through the non-recognition by many teachers of the alienation that so many of its structures and customs promote among Maori and Pacific Islands pupils;

5. the need for a national policy for writing that emphasises its importance as a tool for learning that is relevant to all areas of the curriculum, and to the growth and development of each child's ability to communicate effectively through writing.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

One of the characteristics discernible in the five teachers observed at this level, was their awareness of the importance of environment to the development of children's confidence and competence as writers. All five classrooms were child-centred, language-rich, and reflective of the cultural background, interests and experiences of the children themselves. Children's writing and art could be seen everywhere: on walls and windows, on tables, stands, screens, and pegged to display lines strung across the room. It was displayed in a variety of forms: sheets of paper, booklets, cards, collages, projects, models and mobiles. Displays are changed frequently, with the children themselves having the right to decide what they wished to make public in this way. All five teachers believe that reading other pupils' writing, and seeing the imaginative ways in which it is presented, motivate children to further writing. They consider that the creation of a colourful, visually exciting and child-centred environment is a positive affirmation to the children of the value that the teacher places on their writing.

In creating an environment conducive to writing, organisation of space is an important factor. In each room the 'mat' area was a focal feature, the place where most teacher-organised pre-writing activities, group conferencing and sharing of writing took place. But other features of space organisation were also important. In four of the five rooms, writing and reading corners were situated in close proximity to each other, reinforcing the link between the two. In the fifth, the organisation of the syndicate was such that sustained silent reading, followed by sustained silent writing, was taken in a large carpeted area common to all four class groups within the syndicate. The designation of craft and science areas emphasised the activity-based, investigative nature of the learning process. The fact that children's writing often featured in the 'resources' displayed in these 'corners' is further evidence of the integrated approach to writing characteristic of these teachers.

Other features noted in individual classrooms included, in one room, a 'personal interest' corner, where pupils displayed treasures that they had brought to school and about which they had talked in the sharing time preceding writing. In another room, a construction corner, complete with wood, hammer, nails, mini saws, tinfoil, plastic and other constructional resources, provided an outlet for the energies of the more practically inclined pupils; again, the daily writing often centred on: 'what I made...', 'what I am going to make...', 'how I made ...'. In yet another room, a popular space was the 'listening corner': here the children listened to story, language and music tapes, using the listening-post and separate headphones, read their stories to each other, while the more sophisticated among them read their stories on to tape for others to listen to at a later time. In the same classroom, the computer corner was in great demand. While for most, it was a way of 'publishing' their conferenced draft, for a few it was a pen, and the teacher often had to negotiate with them to ensure that all who wished had an opportunity to draft in this way. The teacher herself also used the computer to draft/script the stories of early and emergent writers, and, with ESL and less competent writers, it often became a blackboard substitute for the teacher's modelling and shared writing.

If organisation of space, in a manner relevant and appropriate to the nature of writing and the needs of pupils, is an important factor to consider in evaluation of effective teacher response, so too are the strategies employed by teachers in their organisation of pupils. On the question of assigning pupils to set places in the classroom, the teachers were divided: three did, two did not. However, in every case, practices for the writing time were flexible and pupils were given a great deal of freedom about their choice of writing place. In one classroom, specific areas were designated for drafting, proofreading, sharing, illustrating, publishing. As well as facilitating the process, this enabled the teacher to monitor what each child was doing and ensured that resources for illustrating and publishing, such as card, large paper, coloured paper, crayons, paint, scissors, glue, were readily available. This practice also served as a noise level control as pupils appeared to respect the need to be quiet near those who were drafting.

In one classroom, writing groups were established according to the pupils' stage of development in relation to the writing process; new entrants: still at the stage of picture-writing and alphabet familiarisation; early writers: at the stage where words begin to replace pictures; emergent writers: confident but still dependent upon the teacher's guidance and input; independent and capable

writers: needing support and praise but motivated, self-initiating and possessing some of the skills of self and peer proofreading. In the other four classrooms, while groups were used from time to time, the rationale for their formation was flexible and determined by a variety of factors: response to pupils' needs, expressed either verbally or behaviourally; teachers' perception of pupils' language needs as manifested through their writing; concerns common to a group of pupils such as topics, genre, stage of draft.

But over-riding, in importance, all these aspects of teacher response is the quality of the relationships between teacher and pupils, and pupils and their peers. Among the many qualities characteristic of the positive relationships existing in all five classrooms, the following features should be singled out:

1. a high expectation of children's ability to communicate in language familiar to them;
2. a recognition of each child's interests as the focus of writing;
3. a realisation of the importance of individual pupil-teacher dialogue about the writing, but non-intrusive in nature;
4. the balance maintained between the encouragement of independence and personal responsibility for writing, and the emphasis placed on co-operative, collaborative sharing at all stages of writing;
5. sensitivity to and acceptance of cultural difference, and the practice of culturally appropriate teaching/learning strategies;
6. an awareness of each child's personal and cultural voice, and of the importance of allowing ownership of the writing to remain with the child.

Pupils' attitudes to each other mirrored the attitudes of their teachers. They worked happily together, although, in general, their relationships and sharing followed the interactive patterns characteristic of this age group, where the child tends to be the centre of its own universe and friendships are often ephemeral and transitory. However, a notable feature of each room was the respect, support and interest they showed towards each other's writing. In all five classrooms, pupils' preferred reading was the stories, poems, 'books' written by other children in the class.

While sensitivity to cultural difference was evident in all classrooms, the strategies used in one school merit specific comment. In this particular school, within each syndicate and in each double teaching space, the children, of whom approximately 80 per cent are Maori or from the Pacific Islands, range from new entrants to Standard 4. In each ropu (syndicate) teachers, environment, classroom organisation, teaching/learning strategies, reflect the bi-cultural/multi-cultural nature of the school's community. Here teachers are seen as the 'elders' within the whanau, and within the context of the ropu, children are respected as individuals with their own cultural richness and knowledge. 'Teina/tuakaiaao' (younger/older) relationships are fostered and are seen to reinforce the school's philosophy that children learn with and from others.

THE WRITING PROCESS

I like the writing programme - this whole idea of teaching a process of writing. It's really terrific. It's fabulous to see kids coming to school, knowing they can write and having a teacher say: 'Oh, yes, you can write - here's paper, go for it'. I think that's super. And I see that when I get them at six and seven and they are so happy to write.

Teachers have developed an understanding of the developmental stages of learning writing and accept that the acquisition may not be equal for every child in the classroom. I think that understanding is number one to the teacher being able to fulfil the role. It doesn't happen everywhere.

This section deals, firstly, with the objectives for writing as expressed in theory and practised in the classroom and, secondly, with what could be called the rehearsal stages of the process: choice of topic, pre-writing activities, modelling, drafting and proofreading. For the sake of clarity, the other aspects: conferencing, editing, publishing, feedback and evaluation, will be dealt with separately.

Objectives

All five teachers set clear and attainable objectives for the writing programme, including:

- providing children with an opportunity to write daily;
- stimulating and encouraging writing by allowing children to write on any subject they choose;
- fostering each child's individual 'voice' in writing;
- allowing children to 'own' their writing and to take responsibility for it;

- building the writing programme upon children's personal interests, reading and oral language experience;
- encouraging children to write from their knowledge and experience, without fear or constraint;
- encouraging inventive spelling at the initial stages of writing;
- developing children's self-checking, self-correcting abilities;
- developing competency and enjoyment in any form of writing;
- exploring and experimenting with a variety of writing genres and registers;
- encouraging writing as an integral part of any thematic, centre of interest unit;
- publishing stories which, in turn, will create interest in other children's writing and thus promote further writing;
- enabling children to see that writing is a process.

Two other objectives which were given high priority in the predominantly non-pakeha classroom, were:

- basing motivation and stimulation for writing on legends, histories and experiences, culturally appropriate to the children's heritage;
- developing children's confidence to write in their own voice by reflecting the oral traditions of their culture.

Choice of topic

Analysis of each teacher's transcript, observation notes and pupils' writing shows that, in the specific time set aside each day for writing, the choice of topic is left to the child. Also, given the stimulating classroom environment and the confidence engendered by the teachers' approach, few children seemed to have difficulty in deciding upon a topic for writing. When this becomes a problem, the teachers' strategy is to get alongside the child, and through discussion, settle upon a topic of interest to the child.

Once again the teachers' reasons for leaving the choice of topic with the child are remarkably similar. All believe that such choice:

1. reinforces the principle that the writing programme is the child's and that, through being able to communicate and write about the experiences important to her, the child gains confidence;
2. gives a purpose to the writing, and because it comes from the child's experience and uses her ideas, reinforces ownership of the writing;
3. recognises the personal knowledge, ideas and experience that each child brings to the classroom and increases confidence in personal identity and in the validity (i.e., worth) of the writing;
4. develops the child's independence and self-motivation.

However, pupils' freedom to write on the topic of their choice does not mean that teachers leave them alone to write 'cold'. Teachers do have an input into the process at this stage. While more will be said about pre-writing activities in the next section, it is important to note here some of the ways in which teachers interact with pupils in relation to choice of topic.

Because of the integrated approach towards writing accepted by each teacher, oral discussion and shared reading times are seen as opportunities for the teacher to input ideas and suggestions for the child's writing. Sometimes these suggestions are recorded for children, to be added to their own personal topic list: a practice seen as important by all the teachers. Implicitly, all see their role as that of nurturing the development of writing by liberating ideas and drawing them out from the children, offering them the support and skills needed to express these ideas in writing, helping them to see the links between the oral and written modes of language, and trying to ensure that the authentic voice expressed in oral language is maintained in the written script.

Even on the occasions when teachers are more directive and topics are teacher-designated, there is always an understanding that the children are free to reject the teacher's suggestion in favour of their preferred topic, unless the writing is specifically factual, or has as its objective the recording of information related to science, social studies, etc.

Pre-writing activities

Pre-writing activities are considered integral to the writing process and, together with the conference, are the times when teacher-input in the form of ideas, suggestions, vocabulary, and conventions is more actively discernible.

Among the reasons given for focussing on the pre-writing stage of writing, six are particularly important as part of an affirmative and effective teacher-response to children's writing:

1. giving children opportunities to discover, explore and develop ideas and to extend vocabulary;
2. stimulating and motivating children's writing by getting the 'language juices' flowing;
3. making children aware of the relationships between writing, reading, speaking, and listening;
4. providing time for children to think about and discuss purpose, audience, format, and strategies for writing;
5. assisting the retention, within the writing, of the cultural voice of the oral tradition: hence careful structuring of pre-writing tasks is very important to non-European writers of English;
6. ensuring that each child knows what she wants to do, whether to continue a draft already begun, to conference a proofread draft with the teacher, to illustrate, to publish, or to begin a new story.

In the time spent in junior classes a wide range of pre-writing activities was observed. These included:

- sharing daily news;
- oral story telling;
- reading aloud, sometimes by the teacher, sometimes by a child;
- looking at and discussing pictures, charts, and visuals of all types, with appropriate language focussed in some way;

- talking about home, school and personal happenings, likes and dislikes;
- pupils' sharing of draft and finished stories - in whole or in part;
- teacher modelling: sentences, paragraphs, stories, poems, factual and information writing, vocabulary use, punctuation, grammatical usage, planning, sequence;
- researching a topic relating to a thematic or integrated unit, social studies, science, current events;
- scribbling;
- drawing;
- drama and music activities;
- interviewing;
- note-taking.

While pre-writing activities sometimes take place in teacher-designated groups, and occasional use is made of peer friendship groupings, with younger children group activities appear less successful than whole class and individually orientated activities, or free-flow groupings based around activities such as reading, researching, drawing.

Modelling

For four of the five teachers, modelling is an essential feature of the teachers' role in writing. The focus of modelling is not on the product but on the process of writing. All four practise modelling in very similar ways.

Firstly, what could be called active, participatory modelling, is used to visibly demonstrate the processes of writing. In this type of modelling the children are actively encouraged to participate in the process by offering suggestions for topics, ideas or vocabulary, by proofreading and by helping the teacher to 'craft' the writing. This type of modelling is used at three points:

1. at the pre-writing stage: when children are gathered together on the mat;
2. during the drafting stage: on a one-to-one basis to help ESL and other pupils having difficulties;

3. at the post-drafting stage to help groups of children experiencing similar problems.

The second type of modelling could be termed passive or exemplary modelling, whereby, during the ten minutes or so of sustained silent writing which generally initiates the drafting period, teachers write alongside the pupils and, on occasion, take their writing through all the stages leading to publication.

The five teachers do not view modelling as a way of telling children: 'Write as I write'. To guard against imitation the teachers are careful to write on topics chosen either for their relevance to the skills being modelled or because they have been suggested by the pupils, and to use a register and style appropriate to the pupils' age and writing needs.

The fifth teacher in the sampling has strong reservations about modelling. In her view, too structured an approach to any area of creative expression such as writing, art, music, dance, intrudes into the child's private world of the imagination, and restricts the emergence of natural spontaneity. To introduce new vocabulary, demonstrate the use of written conventions, and illustrate the importance of sequence and other similar aspects of writing, she uses what she terms **NEWSBOARD**. The difference between this and the modelling used by the other teachers is one of method, not of function. In the **NEWSBOARD** approach, the writing is prepared. The dialogue between the pupils and the teacher focuses on why certain words, phrases, punctuation have been circled or underlined, with the teacher eliciting reasons from the pupils rather than giving reasons to them. The objective for **NEWSBOARD** and modelling is the same: to encourage and support children's writing by assisting them to develop the vocabulary, skills and processes necessary to write with confidence and competence.

Drafting

Because the draft is the basis for further work - proofreading, conferencing, sharing and, if the child wishes, publishing - it is necessary to provide for these activities at the drafting stage. Allowing for slight variations, all teachers adopt similar routines for drafting.

Generally loose paper is used, either wide-lined or computer paper, to free children from the constraints of 'perfect' script, which at this age is often associated with writing done in a book. One teacher prefers to use draft pads which are kept in children's personal folders, handed out each day and collected

at the end of the writing period. Her objective is to glance over the drafts each day and to note any common problems. The daily **NEWSBOARD** activity is used to clarify these problems.

Writing is done in pencil, either writing on every second line, or leaving a wide margin, to allow space for proofreading, and for the amendments, revision and crafting done during conferencing.

'Invented', 'attempted', or 'approximated' spelling is encouraged to facilitate the flow of ideas and because, in this way, the child's knowledge of letter names and sound sequences provides a link between speech and writing. Pupils are encouraged to circle or underline the words of which they are unsure. These words then become the focus for proofreading.

Proofreading

The practices used for proofreading are very similar in the five classrooms. As with drafting, pupils are given clear guidelines for proofreading:

1. they are encouraged to read the writing aloud so that they can hear what they have written and recognise when words, phrases, expressions do not sound right;
2. proofreading is done in pen or biro, and where a spelling correction is made, children write the new version on the line above, and changes made with twink or rubber are not acceptable;
3. children are encouraged to use a dictionary, and in one room the thesaurus, to check spelling or to find a more interesting word;
4. once self-proofing has been completed, children are encouraged to peer-proof with a neighbour or friend, using the same procedures.

In each classroom there were children with competent dictionary and proofreading skills. But while nearly all children made some attempt to proofread their draft, for many proofreading was done in collaboration with the teacher as the first focus of the conference. Again, the same procedure is used: the child reads the draft aloud to the teacher who listens carefully and clarifies any uncertainties verbally, before looking at the draft. Any proofreading attempted by the child is commended; 'invented' or 'approximated' spelling is checked and

again, the child's efforts receive positive affirmation. Wherever possible, the child's ownership of and responsibility for the writing is reinforced by the child holding the pen and making the necessary changes in spelling, punctuation and sometimes elementary grammar. It is only when the proofreading is finished that the teacher begins to interact more intimately with the substance of the writing. With beginning and early writers, this is often the extent of the conference.

CONFERENCING TECHNIQUES

All five teachers consider the conference with the teacher, whether roving, group or individual, to be the quality teaching time, the stage in the writing process when the teacher can respond to and interact with the writer, focusing attention on the interests, abilities and needs of individuals. The conference is the basis of writing development and is used to determine where each child is at, what has been learned, and what needs to be learned. In conferencing, the emphasis is always on what the writer has to say. The teacher's role is that of active listening, and making a response that is encouraging and facilitative.

Roving conferences

Daily roving conferences are a feature of all the teachers' writing programmes. They occur at all stages of the writing process, although all resisted - as far as pupil needs would allow - intruding in the initial minutes of writing.

The roving conference focuses on:

- motivating and stimulating children's writing;
- giving 'on the spot' assistance where a need is indicated by the child or perceived by the teacher;
- observing, monitoring and evaluating writing in process.

Roving conferences are short, generally not more than one to two minutes in length, and are positive and affirmative in tone: e.g., 'That's a good opening sentence', 'How did you work that out?', 'Goodness, I can't wait to read your story!' Even when the interaction occurs in response to a child's expressed need, teachers' responses are generally in the form of clarifying questions: e.g., 'What is it that you want to say?', 'How would you say it if you were

talking to me?' In this way the ownership of the idea remains with the child. With less competent or more diffident writers, where the roving conference may tend to be a little longer, teachers kneel alongside the child and, where this seems appropriate, write collaboratively with her, but again the control of the story-line remains with the child: the teacher's role is to script the ideas.

Group conferences

Except for the teacher whose organisational structure for writing includes groups established according to writing ability, group conferences are used to meet the teaching/learning needs of children experiencing similar specific difficulties. At the drafting stage, such small group conferencing is seen as particularly helpful and appropriate for less fluent writers, those with reading problems, or those for whom English is a second language. For these pupils the group conference is less intimidating than either the whole class or one-to-one situation. It alerts them to the fact that they are not the only ones having difficulty; it enables the teacher to involve them in discussion pitched specifically at their level of need. In these situations the group conference becomes a group teaching, co-operative writing activity.

From time to time, group conference strategies are used to proofread or to share writing. Again, as happens in thematic/integrated/social studies/science units where the draft is often the outcome of collaborative writing, the draft is conferenced in a group, with children asked to identify and comment upon their contribution to the writing.

In the classroom where writing groups are structured according to writing levels, the group is frequently conferenced together, sometimes drafting a story collaboratively, sometimes small group teaching focused on specific areas of weakness noted in drafts, sometimes sharing drafts. With more fluent writers, the group often conducts its own conference, but, at this level, such conferences rarely extend beyond reading each others' stories and proofreading.

Peer conferences

In all five classrooms, teachers encourage children to share and consult with one another about their writing. As one teacher expressed it: 'When I see children talking to each other about their writing, I take it as a sign that the programme is working.'

Although the teachers' aim is to have children interact with each other's writing by asking questions of the writer, making suggestions and giving oral and written feedback, very few children at the junior class level have yet arrived at this more sophisticated stage of peer conferencing. However, something of this kind takes place with more fluent writers in the room organised according to writing levels, and in the 'teina/tuakaiaio' partnerships in the multicultural 'ropu'. These children often ask quite perceptive questions about each other's writing and give constructive suggestions for improving the writing.

Except for the 'teina/tuakaiaio' partnerships, the choice of partner or small group with whom to share writing, proofread or publish, is left to the children. This is the case even in the group-structured classroom. It is interesting to note that weaker writers, while often choosing a more able writer to help with proofreading, generally select children of like ability with whom to share their writing. At this age, at least in these classrooms, there appears to be little evidence of cultural or sex differentiation, either preferential or discriminatory.

Individual conferences

In the view of each of the five teachers, the individual conference is the basis of writing development, and in terms of teaching strategies, the most positive and effective way of responding to the child's writing.

Whereas the roving conference takes place whenever there is a need, or where the teacher chooses to monitor progress by roving the classroom, the individual conference generally occurs at the post-proofreading stage of the writing. Any variations to this principle occur, not because of teacher differences, but because, in each classroom, the child's individual needs determine the nature and scope of the conference.

The methods of conferencing followed by these teachers are very similar. The differences noted related to pre-conference preparation and conference location. Four of the five have a system whereby, prior to the conference, the draft is checked, and the points for conferencing are recorded in the child's running record or writing profile. The points noted include: topic or story, ideas, general construction, spelling, punctuation, sequence and any additional strengths or weaknesses. The fifth teacher rarely pre-reads the draft but relies on the conference interaction to check the writing and register needs. It is interesting to note that this teacher's conferencing techniques are more directive and her interaction with the text more analytical than the other teachers.

Only two teachers have an established routine about the location of individual conferences. With one teacher, individual conferences take place on the mat, with the child sitting alongside, in a chair specifically reserved for this purpose.

In the predominantly multicultural ropu the teacher and the child sit at a low table slightly apart from but close enough to other children for them to hear what is being discussed. The table is large enough for two or three others to join the conference if they wish to, or if the child being conferenced feels the need of peer support.

Generally, the conference method followed these steps:

1. the teacher asks the child to tell her about the story, poem, experience and a short dialogue ensues;
2. the child reads the draft aloud to the teacher while the teacher listens for cues for punctuation and meaning;
3. the teacher looks at the draft, dealing first with the proofing attempted by the child, then with the spelling, punctuation and surface conventions; throughout this phase of the conferencing, ownership is retained by the child who makes the corrections although, for beginning or early writers or less language-competent pupils, the teacher sometimes writes these in for the child;
4. once this has been done, the teacher asks the child whether any help is required and in the ensuing dialogue, the teacher takes the cues from the writer; if these are not forthcoming, the teacher will single out one aspect of the writing on which to focus teaching;
5. the teacher then discusses the next phase: what the child would like to do with the draft, e.g., share it in the sharing time which rounds off each day's writing session, or publish it;
6. if the child does not want to publish that piece of writing, the process ends there, and a few moments are spent discussing what the pupil might like to write about next;

7. if the child decides to publish, the teacher discusses ways of presenting the writing, possible illustrations, and whether the child wants to do the publishing herself or would like it done for her;
8. the teacher's final task is to record relevant details of the conference in the pupil's individual writing record.

Depending on the needs of the writer, the nature and length of the draft, and whether the process ends with the draft or continues through to publication, each draft conference may take anything from three to ten minutes.

As the pupils gain in competence and begin to write longer and more sophisticated stories, editing or publishing conferences are often held. While the substance of these conferences changes, the approach is similar to that described above.

PUBLICATION

All the teachers emphasized that a writer needs readers. Even in private, personal writing associated with diary-writing and journal keeping, there is always a minimum of one reader, the writer. At junior level, practices observed indicate that diary writing generally involves a minimum of three readers: the writer, the teacher and at least one peer, because children at this age have few inhibitions about sharing diary or journal writing. 'Publication', then, includes not only children's writing taken beyond the stage of draft conferencing, but also audience feedback, sharing, and the editing task which precedes the publishing of writing in a more formal and public format.

Audience

Audience feedback is an important element of the writing process. Writing is not complete without an audience. By sharing their writing with others, their peers in particular, children see a reason for writing. At this level, audience criteria are kept very simple:

- is it interesting?
- does it make sense?
- would someone want to read it?

All the teachers are convinced of the need to provide an audience for children's writing that extends beyond the classroom audience of teacher and peers.

Children's writing is shared with:

- parents and family;
- the principal and other teachers;
- pupils in other classrooms and syndicates;

- sometimes a story, poem or piece of writing is read at assembly or included in a school, syndicate, or class newsletter;
- writing is displayed in classrooms, corridors, libraries, school entrances for staff, pupils and visitors to read.

Moreover, in each classroom, children's published writing is considered an important resource for reading activities. All teachers commented that, in the reading time, other children's stories are the most keenly sought after reading material, and that some children have to be directed towards other sources of reading.

Oral sharing

All these teachers see oral sharing of writing, whether it be a published piece, a draft in process, a segment of a story or a sentence which the pupil finds particularly pleasing, as an important facet of each day's writing period. Although a designated sharing time, generally of five to ten minutes in length, is given at the end of the writing time, children are encouraged to share their writing at any point in the writing process. Having something to share was regarded as a stimulus or incentive for writing. More confident and competent writers are also motivated to share their draft because of a desire for further ideas, according to the junior school teachers.

An objective common to all five teachers, is that of encouraging children to give positive, constructive audience feedback that goes beyond: 'I liked your story' to: 'I liked your story. Did the sharks get him?'; 'It was too short but you had some interesting words'; 'What did you mean by?'. However, such responses seem difficult for children of this age.

In one classroom the opportunity to give such feedback is particularly well structured. Those who wish to share some writing, read it aloud to the class. Alternatively, they may ask another child or the teacher to read it; then those who wish to make a comment or ask a question, raise their hands, and the writer decides who will be given the chance to respond. The teacher's response is the last to be made, but it is interesting to note how pupils' responses to the next piece of writing are modelled on the earlier teacher response. The comments made and questions asked in this classroom were more precisely honed to the writing than the comments and questions asked in other classrooms.

Teacher modelling is not restricted to response. In three of the five classrooms, teachers modelled by sharing their own writing and inviting children's comments and questions.

Publication and editing

As with the sharing of the draft, so too, with publishing: the decision is left with the child. All the teachers, however, recognise the need to diagnose the root cause of reluctance towards publishing, e.g., diffidence, laziness, boredom with the current story, dissatisfaction with the writing, a burning desire to get going on the next story. For these reasons, at this level, publishing is kept simple. With early and emergent writers, the teacher often publishes the writing for the child. Two teachers have been able to organise what one calls 'publishing mothers', who give some time each week to typing or writing up children's stories. In one room, children frequently use the classroom computer for publishing. Sometimes a school secretary assists but, generally, children beyond the emergent writing phase do their own publishing.

In all the classrooms the editing of writing for publication is considered to be the teacher's task, but done in collaboration and with the child's approval so that the pupil's ownership of the writing is retained.

In editing, all teachers are very careful to maintain the child's voice. Hence, editing at this level is generally confined to spelling, conventions of punctuation and grammar, and the criteria mentioned earlier: is it clear? and does it make sense? With more competent and fluent writers, the editing may be more rigorous, and the teacher may work with the child on aspects such as purpose, content, message, detail, sequence and organisation, so that editing begins to be closely allied to the crafting process. But whether it is restricted to surface errors of writing or delves deeper into the crafting of writing, the teachers' editing is controlled by two over-riding principles. Firstly, the content, meaning and format are not altered and the child's decisions about suggested changes that go beyond the conventions of spelling, punctuation and usage, are respected. The writing is considered to be the child's property. Secondly, while it is regarded as important for the child to publish, every piece of writing does not have to be taken through to the editing and publishing stages. It is the process of thinking, drafting, conferencing, sharing which is viewed as of value to the writer.

As already stated under 'Classroom Management', display of children's work is a feature of all classrooms. Writing, once displayed, is kept in some type of personal folder, or bound together into either a personal or class anthology of writing, or in the case of non-writing paper presentations, taken home. Generally, booklets and anthologies are catalogued and displayed in the reading area. Also, in each classroom children are encouraged to see illustrations, preferably their own, as an integral part of writing.

EVALUATION

In the junior classes the lines dividing assessment and evaluation are blurred. Teachers tend to speak of evaluation as a synonym for assessment even though, in practical terms, the issues with which they are concerned, i.e., pupils' attitudes to and interest in writing, and their progress and achievement as writers, equate more accurately with assessment than with evaluation. Strictly speaking, evaluation relates to programmes and how these reflect and implement the overall policy or syllabus aims.

Objectives

The objectives by which the junior class teachers observed assess or evaluate their pupils' writing clearly indicate a knowledge and understanding of the writing process in itself and as practised and internalised by the children. These objectives are clearly formulated and are specific both to the kind of writing and the various processes involved. They include:

Does the child:

- have a purpose for writing?
- write in a variety of genres?
- share the writing?
- publish the writing?

Can the child write to:

- convey personal experience?
- discover and generate ideas?
- provide an aesthetic experience?
- correspond with others?
- present facts and events?

Does the child have:

- the confidence to try out new and unknown words?
- the ability to extend ideas, change sentences, alter sequence?

Can the child:

- take responsibility for her own writing through proofreading?
- acknowledge the writing of peers and give feedback?

Other objectives, not always stated explicitly, but implicit in every aspect of classroom practice and teacher response, include whether the child:

- chooses her own topic for writing?
- rehearses writing through drafting?
- shares and discusses the draft with others?
- participates actively in conferencing?

What makes these teachers effective both in evaluating their own programmes and assessing pupils' writing, is their recognition that these objectives have to be adapted to where each child is at in the acquisition of competence and confidence in writing. The objectives for each pupil are child and task specific, and expressed in criteria that are sufficiently simple for pupils to understand, e.g.:

- does the writing make sense?
- does it say what you want it to say?
- is the form appropriate to the writing?

Feedback

The junior school teachers are strongly of the opinion that the most effective form of evaluation, i.e., the one to which pupils respond most positively, is the feedback received from teachers. Such feedback, mainly oral, is given both in the drafting and draft conferencing phases of the writing, and in the sharing, editing, publishing phases.

Oral feedback observed during drafting concentrates on:

- open-ended questioning to clarify meaning;
- on-the-spot teaching to respond to a child's specific question or to meet a need;
- encouragement and praise for interesting story-lines, choice of words, and skills development;
- comments designed to motivate and sustain the writing, provide audience feedback and recognise effort.

During the conference the focus of the teacher-pupil feedback is on:

- identification and exploration of the story-line;
- purpose of the story;
- clarification of meaning and what the writer is trying to convey;
- order and sequence;
- strengths and weaknesses.

In conferencing, the focus of all feedback is the child **as writer**, so that, wherever possible, the child initiates and controls the dialogue and the teacher's feedback is the response.

In the sharing times, both those that are organised and those which occur spontaneously throughout the process, feedback is always of an affirmative nature, emphasising the pieces of writing that work: an interesting word, a vivid description, an authentic sounding conversation or a novel idea.

In the junior classes, except with ESL pupils, written feedback is less frequently given. The comments that are sometimes written on drafts are made in the presence of the child, and generally in response to a request, or when it seems important to give a written reinforcement of what has been discussed orally. However, when it is appropriate to the format of published work, all but one of the teachers make frequent use of affirmative and interactive comments, couched in reader-friendly terms that are specific both to the writer and the writing.

Checklists and records

The teachers' attitudes to checklists for writing are ambivalent. While all make use of some form of checklist, they are not fully convinced of their effectiveness as an instrument against which to monitor a child's development. The teachers view checklists as a reminder of the skills that have been mastered by the child or which need to be acquired, but recognise that there is a dichotomy between the holistic thrust which characterises the writing process and the 'atomistic' monitoring of skills in isolation. Moreover, the child who may have mastered the skills of capitals and full stops in one kind of writing such as a simple story or journal entry, may have difficulty in maintaining those same skills in a longer story where concentration is focussed on a storyline and sequence. What is important to record, therefore, is the child's ability to recognise, in the proofreading stage, where full-stops and capitals are needed to make sense of the writing so that it will convey meaning to the reader.

However, in each of these schools, there is an expectation that some form of checklist for recording each child's skills acquisition throughout the year will be maintained.

Of more relevance to the writing process is the practice, adopted by all these teachers, of recording conferences. These records, called variously conference journals, running records or writing profiles, focus on writing in action, and while weaknesses in such things as grammar, punctuation, spelling and structure are noted, this is done within the context of a given piece of writing. Both strengths and weaknesses are recorded, not in isolation but in relation to the pupil's development as an individual writer.

These records detail:

- date of the conference;
- nature of the conference: draft, editing for publication;
- type of writing and topic;
- points noted by the teacher in pre-conference reading of the draft;
- aspects of writing conferenced with the pupil: strengths and weaknesses, conventions, etc;
- tasks targeted for ongoing writing: if publishing is the next step, the target will relate to illustrations and presentation; if it is a new draft, the target will include, as well as topic/type of writing, some specific point of writing on which to work.

Several aspects of this approach to assessment and evaluation make it particularly effective in developing children's competence as writers:

- it is child specific and focuses not on what should be done but upon what is being done;
- it involves the child and gives her a voice in the evaluation;
- it records both strengths and weaknesses and puts them into the context of a specific piece of writing;
- it forms a basis for the next conference and ensures continuity from one piece of writing to the next;
- it allows the child to retain control and ownership of the writing.

One of the teachers sums up what, in her view, should be the teacher's approach to children's writing. Her words are as appropriate to assessment and evaluation as they are to other aspects of the learning process:

in all my teaching, not just my writing programme, I want to learn as much from them as they learn from me. And I know it's within them, so the writing is just following along a path and gradually they get more and more confident and say, 'yes, I can do it', and we go into that area. I take my writing programme totally from where each child is at ... For me, the writing process tells them that they are responsible... I try not to take over the children's writing when I intervene because they like to feel that the ownership is their own.

ASSISTANCE AND INTERVENTION

This section examines, firstly, the general principles governing these teachers' classroom practice as it relates to the assistance they give to pupils; secondly, their attitudes towards spelling, punctuation and grammar; and thirdly, their concern for the maintenance of the child's voice in and ownership of their writing.

General principles

I intervene when I feel that I need to assist. I intervene when I feel a child is struggling - they want to say something but they are not quite sure: they just know they want to say something but they are not sure of how to go about it.

[I intervene] ... whenever and with whatever is needed by a particular individual child e.g., the obvious ones who are sitting there, chafing their pencil and looking at the ceiling and they'll be different children, different needs.

Probably I'm at my most interventionist - if that's the word I want to use and I don't like to see myself as an intervention type teacher - probably I would give most input at conference time ... I find I seldom have to intervene as far as ideas go ... It's a delicate thing, I suppose, at all stages, but I think that for beginning writers it is just so important that you don't close off their wanting to write.

I try to stay right away from ideas, away also, from anything that is formal ... it's a supervisory role for me, only because I believe very much in the process of writing and not becoming a part of what a child is doing, unless a child actually wants you to help him get started, or asks 'what's this word?', or 'how does it fit?', or 'how is it used?', that sort of thing. It's very much a back-seat role. It's more a facilitating role; it's one of keeping things moving, of motivating, and being positive.

As far as I am concerned [intervention] varies according to every situation and every individual child who confronts me with a problem, or with whom I identify a problem or a need, a particular ability even.

These quotations, taken from the transcripts of the five teachers of junior classes, sum up their classroom practice during the writing process, particularly the kinds of assistance most valued. All the teachers are aware of the individuality of each child, and recognise that the need for assistance differs, not only from one child to another, but also from one stage of the process to the next, and from situation to situation.

When requested by the child, or perceived as necessary by the teacher, assistance is given in a range of ways:

1. roving conferencing to respond to an acknowledged or perceived need; to show interest in and give encouragement to writing, e.g., 'what are you up to?', 'where are you going?';
2. short, targeted, whole class teaching to initiate a theme, model a format, introduce vocabulary, focus on a problem common to the majority of children, e.g., 'this is happening...', 'can you see what's happening?';
3. small group discussions with children experiencing similar difficulties;
4. individual conferencing to see where the child is at, what has been learned, what needs to be learned.

Spelling

Teachers' attitudes to spelling are summed up in the policy statement of one school:

SPELLING IS FOR WRITING. A child's spelling programme must be closely related to that child's writing programme. The child's capacity to spell will grow through daily writing (and reading) together with self-correction of spelling. An array of separate spelling activities may be drawn on, if judged to be of value to the child.

Specific practices observed in classrooms and considered successful by teachers include:

1. modelling spelling in the writing teachers do in front of pupils;
2. encouraging invented or approximated spelling which enables beginning and emergent writers to retain the spontaneity of their own language;
3. establishing methods by which the child indicates invented or approximated spelling: this helps the child to check spelling in the proofreading stage and, in the conferencing phase, makes it easier for the teacher to identify spelling needs;
4. teaching dictionary skills and encouraging more competent writers to use a dictionary to check spelling at the proofreading stage; this gives the pupils the power to be independent writers;
5. developing a personal spelling resource list, to meet individual needs; the list, consisting of a mixture of words used by the child in the draft and words suggested by the teacher, becomes the target of the child's mastery learning;
6. teachers' editing of the drafts to be published; this practice has a double focus: it makes pupils aware of the standards of correctness appropriate to publication and, at the same time, takes from them the burden of constant rewriting which, at this stage of development, can inhibit writing and lead to frustration.

Punctuation

If someone comes to me and I see that they are putting in a bit of punctuation, I see that's where they're at, and that's what I help them with.

Often children at this stage will have very little punctuation, so as they read and if they stop - and they do - and then carry on - then we know there's a full stop and capital letters.

Often I choose what I'm going to model, for example, full stops, but the children choose the topic I'm going to model on.

All these teachers agree that the purpose of punctuation is to clarify meaning for the reader. It is a tool of communication: it is for writing what intonation and emphasis are for speech. In teaching various aspects of punctuation the criteria should be the child's readiness, and appropriateness to the sense and meaning of the writing.

Specific practices used which appeared to be successful include:

1. modelling punctuation;
2. encouraging children, in the proofreading stage, to read their writing aloud, either to themselves or to a peer, to note where they pause in order to make the meaning clear or to take a breath;
3. at the beginning of the conference, allowing the pupil to read their writing aloud to the teacher, so that the teacher can cue in the necessary punctuation;
4. discussing and modelling with each individual pupil, the punctuation appropriate and relevant to both the needs of the child and the format of the writing.

Grammar

I don't teach it. ... Grammar, I think, comes through if you talk with children a lot, and I'm sure it comes through written work because they re-read and they think: 'is that quite right?'

We mention it ... the correct grammar, because it's ESL. This is a policy. We talked about it with the reading recovery teacher ... that if someone writes down an incorrect word, we say to them - 'that's not how you say it in English' - as part of the writing, but never in isolation.

On the whole I would say I certainly don't have any element within the programme in which we could handle functional language or anything ghastly like that.

Successful practices observed in the classrooms and reflected in pupils' work include:

1. modelling established usage and discussing it with the children;
2. conferencing pupils about incorrect usage and helping them to understand why specific aspects of their writing need changing, before these amendments are written into the draft.

As with punctuation, the approach towards grammar is individual: a response to the child's needs in relation to the stage of the writing and the pupil's learning/teaching readiness. However, there is general agreement among the five teachers that published writing needs to be as grammatically correct as is appropriate to the stage of development of each individual writer.

Voice and ownership

I think that in the writing process, the main thing that I am looking for is their voice. I want them to come through, and for me - for them - to be able to listen to that person.

Whatever culture that a child brings is a knowledge base that we can all share in and use ... each child brings to school, knowledge that is specific, in which he is successful, so when a child enters our school, that's what we explore and that's what we use in all language forms, symbolic behaviours and so on.

They've got to be in control of the process. That's why I, fairly reluctantly, never insist on the topic. So they've always even got that control.

I try to let the children keep control of the pencil because I think that's really important; I don't want to own their writing ... Some children choose not to publish; that, to me, is up to them, it's part of the ownership of the writing.

The whole approach of these teachers, in their response to children's writing, is one which acknowledges, affirms, and respects each child's cultural heritage, interests, points of view and stage of personal development. Their classroom practices, while fostering sharing, co-operation and collaboration among the pupils, also nurture the individuality of each child, and are designed to foster independence as a writer, and the skills necessary to take personal responsibility for their writing.

CHAPTER FIVE: WRITING IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF AND APPROACHES TOWARDS WRITING

[Writing]... is crucial, I think, because it is so clearly associated with their thinking processes. It's a tangible way of communicating with a child. I just think it's vital ... I think oral language leads on to written language and, I think, particularly with the children that I'm teaching, children for whom English is a second language, the oral and the written language can be a hand-in-hand process.

At the moment I am moving away from categories, process/creative writing as being a special kind of writing because I cannot separate writing from the reading of it.

I give [writing] a very high importance, probably second to oral in importance - writing from the oral would be my approach. ... We spend a good proportion of the day on writing and sharing writing ... I would give it a very, very high profile in my classroom, and we use writing as a means to convey ideas.

Writing is an integral part of a balanced language programme covering many genres ... it is a process, not a product.

[Writing]... would have a fairly high priority in my programme, because, out of all our activities, writing is often an outcome.

From these short quotations taken from the transcripts of each of the five teachers observed in their classroom at the Standard Three to Four level, it can be seen that their perceptions of writing are very similar. All see writing not only as integral to their language programme, but also as an essential component of all learning. Writing is considered to be firmly rooted in oral language and to grow from it. All agree that writing is a process and that it must be given time to develop.

In their classroom practice all five teachers demonstrate their belief in the individuality of each child, acknowledging and accepting difference, whether it relates to culture, gender, aptitude, attitude, social or economic background, and recognising the influence that these factors have upon the processes through which children learn. The fact that they operate within composite classes (four with a combination of Standard Three to Standard Four pupils, one with pupils ranging from Standard Two to Four) makes little difference to their approach to teaching. Pupils are seen as individuals, and in their writing they are encouraged to express their own ideas, experiences, thoughts, feelings and opinions, in any way in which they feel comfortable.

The teachers at this level shared a number of approaches to writing.

1. While writing is perceived as an activity associated with all areas of the curriculum, a daily, specified time for personal writing is seen as necessary to give children the scope in which to explore their ideas freely and without the constraints imposed by the need to conform to a set agenda, produce a finished article or achieve a specific result. Even when the teacher sets a theme or topic for writing, as happens from time to time with all but two of these teachers, a degree of choice is included. Also, the demand to follow the teacher's lead is not absolute: pupils still have the right to negotiate the topic.
2. Pre-writing activities are seen as necessary in order to give pupils an opportunity to share, explore, sound out and test their ideas, to receive input, both from the teacher and each other and to acquire new knowledge as it relates to vocabulary and usage. Such activities are not designed to control and define the writing, but to motivate and stimulate the child to write.
3. Drafting is regarded as a key phase in the writing process since through drafting the child sifts and organises thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences, and gives them shape and form. The teacher's role in the drafting phase varies from pupil to pupil: while being sensitive to the needs of the child experiencing difficulty, and ready to give encouragement, assistance, and support where needed, interaction during the first ten to twenty minutes of the drafting time is reduced to a minimum. When assistance is provided, it takes account of individual need and is given in a quiet and non-intrusive manner.

4. Proofreading is viewed as an important aspect of writing. For children to exercise competence and to feel confident as proofreaders, they are taught its skills, have available to them the necessary resources (such as a dictionary and thesaurus) and are familiarised with routines and practices that will assist the process and allow ownership of the writing to remain with them.
5. Both the quick, roving type of conference given in response to a pupil's request or the teacher's perception of need, and the longer, individual conference which follows the drafting and proofreading phases of writing, are seen as crucial to pupils' growth as writers. The conference gives the teacher an opportunity to interact with the pupil using the writing as the focus of the dialogue and, where possible, the initiative for the conference and the points discussed remain with the pupil. The conference is seen as the time when the teacher's input is most productive because it is responsive to and directed towards the child's specific needs and stage of development. The conference provides a secure framework in which the pupil can explore ideas, ask for help and receive suggestions without losing personal identity or control of the writing.
6. Publishing, while not viewed as an essential outcome for every piece of writing, is encouraged. Publishing is seen as a reinforcement of the concept of writing as communication, i.e., writers need readers and readers need writing. Through sharing and publishing their writing, pupils obtain feedback from their peers which, in turn, motivates and gives ideas for further writing.

In their interpretation of modelling, these teachers differ greatly. Their approaches range from daily diary modelling, carefully structured as to topic, length and response, to modelling as a way of focusing the teaching of language aspects such as grammar, punctuation, form, style and conventions, to using the writing of other writers as models, including pupils' writing, to almost no modelling of any type at all.

In the opinion of the teachers observed at this level, the process approach to writing has many strengths, both in relation to the pupil as learner and to the teacher as the facilitator and supporter of children's writing.

For the children as learners the strengths of the writing process are that it:

1. recognises individual differences and preferences;
2. takes the child from where she is to the next stage without fear and when the pupil is ready to move on;
3. gives value to the child's own ideas, experiences, feelings and opinions, and thus increases the pupil's confidence in her ability to express herself through writing;
4. assures to the child the right to write without fear of intrusion and interference;
5. enables the child to understand more easily the links between oral language, writing and reading;
6. reinforces the concepts of control and ownership of the writing, through the emphasis given to drafting, proofreading, rehearsal;
7. supports those pupils whose cultural forms of communication are orientated more towards oral modes of language than to written modes, and those for whom English is a second language.

For the teachers among the strengths of the writing process mentioned are that:

1. it enables teachers to interact with each pupil as an individual and to tailor teaching to personal abilities and needs;
2. through conferencing, teachers are able to develop a personal relationship with each child, and to adjust their approach accordingly being encouraging, facilitating, supporting, teaching, questioning, or challenging as the occasion demands;
3. its methods are particularly appropriate for Maori, Pacific Islands and other bilingual and bi-cultural pupils, as they provide opportunities for group and individual assistance in a flexible, child-friendly and relaxed environment.

However, while these teachers are firm advocates of a process approach to writing and two use similar process approaches in all areas of their curriculum programmes, they share a concern about misinterpretations involving the writing process. One misinterpretation held by many teachers is the view that the writing process approach allows pupils a daily time in which they write on anything they like, without benefit of interaction or assistance from the teacher; as one person expressed it: 'privatisation of the child's writing to an extreme which often results in totally meaningless scribble'. Many of these teachers refer to 'process writing' as if it were a genre separate from other forms of writing which consists mainly of diary and journal entries. On the other hand, are those teachers whose over-intervention, particularly during the drafting and conferencing phases, intrudes upon the child's thought processes, thus negating the child's voice and usurping ownership of the writing.

Other concerns expressed include:

1. an over-emphasis on correctness, which results in a loss of spontaneity and a preoccupation with the product, rather than with the process of writing;
2. lack of input (such as brief periods of focussed teaching) which meets both general and specific needs;
3. the confusion that exists between proofreading, i.e., the means by which pupils, assisted by their peers and, where necessary, the teacher, remove irregularities in grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage, which impair the writer's message, and editing, i.e., the crafting of writing which, at this age, is most often undertaken by the teacher in collaboration with the writer.

Two teachers were also concerned about the possibility of teacher modelling becoming too directive, with the result that pupils' patterning of their writing on the teacher's model leads to loss of personal voice and individuality in their writing.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

In three of the five classrooms, size, decor and location were not ideal, but these deficiencies were compensated for by the visual richness of the displays of children's work, i.e., individual pieces of writing, books, collages, models, mobiles, charts, masks, wall and ceiling hangings. There seemed to be no limit to the imaginative forms the presentation of work could take.

The prevalence of the children's own work contributed greatly to the child-centred emphasis of each classroom: they were children's work places rather than teachers' classrooms. The purposeful but flexible environment and the warm, friendly atmosphere of each classroom were influential in promoting the happy and co-operative working habits that seemed to exist among the pupils in each room.

The physical organisation of space and resources also reflected the emphasis on activity-based and personalised learning. In each room, the mat area was the central feature, where most of the teacher-organised activities related to writing (i.e., pre-writing activities, group and individual conferencing, small group teaching and sharing of writing) took place. In two of the less well-designed rooms, the presence of mats and sofas in the mat area added a feeling of comfort and homeliness which would otherwise have been lacking.

Other features common to all rooms included reading and writing corners, in all of which pupils' own writing was given a high profile; social studies and science corners where most of the material displayed was the children's own and much of it had a high proportion of writing; mathematics areas; arts and craft areas, generally well stocked with paper of all types, size and colour, cardboard, paints, scissors, glue, and old magazines. Art corners were the areas where many of the activities associated with publishing were carried out, and they reinforced the links between visual and verbal communication.

The writing corner established in one of the rooms was separated from the rest of the classroom by screens which also served an extra purpose for the display of written and graphic work. The area was furnished with four carrels, a large table used for publishing, a computer, a listening post, and an assortment of resource books with ideas and suggestions for writing, some of which had been prepared by the teacher. Pupils could retreat here to write whenever they wished and, provided the space was not wanted by anyone needing privacy for writing, it could also be used for reading. Although this space was common to the two other rooms in the syndicate, it was used predominantly by the class being observed, since theirs was the only room in the syndicate organised around activity-based, group and individualised learning.

Organisation of pupils within the classrooms also reflected the teachers' personal approach to teaching and learning. In two rooms, children sat in teacher-assigned places. In the Standard Two to Four room the allocation of places was determined by the teacher's need to establish and reinforce harmonious relationships and good working habits among a group of children who, for the first five months of the year, had been taught by a teacher whose lack of appreciation and understanding of Maori and Pacific Islands pupils (80 per cent of the school's intake) had resulted in the development of very disruptive classroom behaviour. In this room, long tables were arranged in well-spaced double lines across and down one side of the room, to ensure that the teacher could have unimpeded eye-contact with each child. In the second, where 11 of the 14 pupils were non-pakeha, desks were arranged in clusters of four and children were assigned to each according to a mixture of culture, gender, class and ability. In both of these classrooms, seating arrangements are changed at least twice a term.

In the other three rooms, pupils are allowed free choice of classroom place. In one, where 35 pupils are assigned to a room designed for 25 pupils, the teacher overcame some of the overcrowding by arranging desks in four large concentric semi-circles, allowing space at the back for resources and group activities. In the fourth room, desks are scattered about singly or in pairs. When pupils want to work independently or to have privacy space (often the case in the drafting, publishing phases), large cardboard dividers are used to create carrels where children can be free from the distraction of eye-contact, or closeness to others in the classroom. In the fifth room, where the total programme is designed around individualised and activity-based learning, pupils sit according to the activity in which they are engaged at any given time;

for example, if they are doing mathematics they will work in the area where the mathematics resources are located; if they are writing, they settle themselves in either the writing area or the reading corner or some other area not in use.

While learning groups are a feature common to all these classrooms, the basis of the organisation differs from one curriculum area to the next. Generally, in reading and mathematics, ability is the organising principle, whereas in language, social studies, science, arts and craft, groups are organised randomly. However, for writing, practices differ.

In the predominantly Maori/Pacific Islands classroom, regular groups are not used, either for conferencing or sharing; instead, if groups are used, their composition is determined by 'needs', as these become apparent in the drafting stage or as they emerge through children's questions, attitudes or behaviour.

In the second room, except when pupils are involved in writing associated with project activities, group conferences do not feature in the writing programme because of the teacher's belief that children in a group situation at this stage of their inter-personal development, concentrate more on the writer and the ideas expressed than on the writing itself. Therefore, while groups are sometimes used at the proofreading and sub-editing phases of the process, they are not used at the draft or conferencing stages.

In two of the three rooms where the whole programme is organised on activity-based learning as opposed to a teacher instruction model, and where conferencing strategies are implemented across most areas of the curriculum, the writing groups are largely organised to ensure that each pupil is conferenced at least once a week. When the so-called conference group assembles on the mat for its weekly conference period, the children bring with them their drafts or whatever other work they are doing at the time and work quietly at this, while awaiting their turn for an individual conference. In the fifth room, however, regular conference groups are established, and the responsibility for conferencing is shared among the pupils and with the teacher. Here, while groups span the class levels, their composition is determined by pupils' competencies and needs as writers, with the teacher being very careful to ensure that each group is representative of the cultural and gender differences within the classroom.

However, despite the differences in organising pupils for writing, these teachers shared a similar type of relationship with their pupils. In all rooms, the relaxed, flexible and tensionless atmosphere, the respect shown for cultural difference, the recognition and acceptance of each child's individual abilities, interests and needs, and the encouragement given to initiative and independence, are balanced by firmness in dealing with inappropriate or disruptive behaviour, high expectations of pupils' adherence to classroom procedures, and courtesy, co-operation and consideration for others.

In their turn, children appreciate each other's talents and are supportive of and interested in the writing of their peers. In most cases they work well together, whether in formal or informal, structured or unstructured situations. This is true even of the class which, at the beginning of the year, gained a reputation for being unruly and ill-disciplined. Above all, relationships between teacher and pupils and between pupils and their peers create an impression of each classroom as a place where pupils are happy to be and where they enjoy the opportunities provided to work both independently and with others.

THE WRITING PROCESS

This section of the report deals with the ways in which the five teachers observed at the Standard Three to Four level interpret and practise some of the pre-conferencing phases of the writing process.

Objectives

Objectives in accord with the principles of a process-orientated approach towards the teaching of writing play an important part in these classroom programmes, and include:

- providing daily opportunities for writing;
- integrating writing into every aspect of the curriculum;
- generating in pupils an interest in and enjoyment of writing;
- providing a classroom atmosphere conducive to writing;
- providing opportunities for pupils to discuss and share their ideas for writing;
- helping pupils to understand that writing is a process not just a product;
- modelling writing by writing in order to show its value, the phases of the process, the characteristics of different genres and the use of mechanical conventions;
- using writing to communicate and compare ideas, convey emphasis, express personal opinion and record facts;

- familiarising pupils with the skills of proofreading and revision;
- allowing quality time for pupils to formulate and organise their ideas in draft form;
- using conferencing techniques for interacting with pupils about their writing, for clarifying meaning, for extending vocabulary, for developing and expanding competencies, for supporting, encouraging and motivating writing;
- giving pupils pride in their writing by encouraging them to write in their own voice and to take responsibility for their own writing;
- encouraging pupils to share their writing through publishing;
- allowing ownership of the writing to remain with the child.

In the classroom mainly composed of Maori and Pacific Islands pupils, many found the written forms of English difficult, or had limited knowledge of the English language. The objectives for the writing programme established for these children are very specific:

1. through the daily modelling and sharing of the teacher's own 'daily diary', to develop the attitudes and skills necessary for personal writing (e.g., goals, audience, paragraphing, vocabulary, proofreading);
2. through 'story writing' (individual creative writing) to give the children opportunities to work on their own topic, at their own pace;
3. to increase children's confidence in communicating ideas by encouraging the use of picture-writing to clarify ideas, sequence, etc.

Choice of topic

In their attitude to ideas and choice of topics for writing, all these teachers reflect the approach to writing popularised by Donald Graves. They believe in the importance of giving children the opportunity to think about what they want to write, to plan their writing and to choose their own topic. However, they also see the need to balance this approach with times when the theme for writing is determined by the teacher.

Generally, the teachers' contribution to children's ideas for writing is implicit rather than explicit. Ideas generated through drama, role play and mime are used to explore themes, situations, ideas, emotions and feelings. Children's reading, including books read aloud and shared in class, and children's own writing, are a rich source of ideas and suggestions for writing. School experiences such as the class camp, visitors to the school or classroom, swimming and athletic sports, gala days, assembly presentations, school concerts, outdoor education activities, and educational visits all offer ideas for the children's writing, particularly for those pupils whose experiences outside school appear limited by the social and economic factors that control or curtail their experience.

Where the children themselves have plenty of ideas for writing, the teachers explore, extend and clarify these ideas through discussion, either with the child on an individual basis, or by providing a forum in which the pupils can interact among themselves, exchanging and exploring ideas.

Where children seem to lack ideas for writing or find it hard to select a topic on which to write, the five teachers observed exercise sensitivity in responding to that apparent need. Often the difficulty occurs not because the child lacks ideas for writing, but because of a lack of self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy so that her own experiences are rejected as being of any interest to anyone or of any value for writing. This type of reaction to writing seems to be rare among the pupils in these five classrooms because the teachers' knowledge of and interest in each child, and the positive responses they give to pupils' ideas or suggestions have created an environment of trust in which the pupil feels sufficiently secure to write from and of her own experiences.

Practices observed in these classrooms include:

1. the compilation, by each child, of a 'list of ideas for writing', which is added to as new ideas arise;
2. classroom charts or lists of ideas and suggestions for writing, to which the pupils are encouraged to contribute;
3. occasional sessions, either with the whole class, a group or in pairs, where pupils brainstorm ideas for writing, discuss them, and then sift out those that seem to have little potential for story writing. The most popular suggestions are displayed, and pupils are encouraged to add further suggestions;

4. the classroom 'topic box' in which photos, pictures, newspaper and magazine cuttings, cartoons, captions and other types of 'starters', are mounted on cards and kept in a box in the classroom for those who need some stimulation;
5. theme-centred writing: together, the teacher and pupils discuss and share ideas, and finally select a theme around which children write their stories;
6. topical events, for example, the Olympic Games, offer relevant 'copy' for writing and provide opportunities for pupils to write in a variety of registers;
7. visits from published writers, particularly those who write children's stories (for example, Margaret Mahy, and Maurice Gee) motivate children to write, and help them to understand that the writing process is the same for all writers;
8. introduction of a theme, idea or topic, through drama, mime, music or art, to show relationships among the visual and expressive arts, and to stimulate an exploration of writing stemming from these ideas;
9. collaborative/co-operative/group story writing in which the group decides upon a theme, plot and characters, and together writes a story. In one classroom this idea extended to a whole class activity, where each week's 'episode', much in the manner of a TV serial, was written by a different group and shared with the class. In the view of the teacher this activity taught the class a great deal about focus, storyline, characterisation, plot, sequence, continuity and credibility, as criteria for evaluating a story.

Three practices observed in the predominantly Maori/Pacific Islands classroom, while being designed to meet the needs of these particular pupils, have relevance for all teachers anxious to respond effectively to the needs of reluctant writers or those with limited English language competencies: diary writing, story writing and topic activities.

1. Diary writing

Each morning the teacher shares, with the pupils, her diary in which she recounts, in a very personal way but using simple language, what happened to her the evening before. The diary is generally 'pre-written' so that as well as being a focus for ideas, it is also a way of modelling vocabulary and simple conventions. After the children have discussed the teacher's diary and questioned her about it, they write up their own entry of what they did after school the night before, trying to incorporate some of the vocabulary and conventions modelled by the teacher. When she first began to use this idea the teacher used to ask for three paragraphs, but now asks for one as a more realistic objective. After twenty minutes or so the diaries are taken in by the teacher.

During the day the teacher looks over the diary writing, asking questions or making comments in the margin; the pupil takes the diary home for parents or carers to read and sign, some even adding questions or comments of their own. As well as being a writing activity which the children enjoy, and through which they learn to explore and express their own feelings, experiences, ideas and problems, the teacher sees the diary as an important link between school and home, a means by which parents and carers come to a fuller understanding of both the child and the school.

2. Story writing

This is the other principal form of writing in which children engage during the daily writing period. In story writing the choice of topic remains with the child but certain parameters are set:

- stories may not be a 'retelling' of videos;
- every fictional story must be followed by a non-fiction or factual story.

3. Topic activities

The weekly 'topic activities' is a structured programme, aimed at extending children's knowledge - ideas and vocabulary - through a process of pre-testing, inputting, exploring through both oral and written language activities, and re-testing. The themes selected for topic activities are ones of general interest and topicality, for example, immunisation. The teacher sees these activities as being of considerable value in increasing both the children's knowledge-base and their confidence in expressing themselves, whether in speech or writing.

Pre-writing activities

As is evident from the objectives they set for their writing programmes, the teachers at the Standard Three to Four level see pre-writing activities as an important element of the writing process. In this, they adhere closely to a basic principle of the primary language syllabus: 'Language is primarily oral. Children learn to speak before they learn to read and write'.

Writing is a form of communication, with preparation through talk and interactive experiences, based on watching, viewing, moving, shaping and participatory recollection seen as valuable pre-writing supports.

All these teachers see oral language and reading activities as pre-requisites for writing, designed to:

- motivate and stimulate the pupil's cognitive and imaginative faculties;
- generate, clarify, explore, and expand ideas;
- enable the pupil to clarify, in relation to intended writing, the appropriate purpose, audience, and register;
- extend the pupil's knowledge of and control over language;
- enlarge the pupil's understanding of the relationships between, on the one hand, speaking, reading and writing, and, on the other, writing, visual and non-verbal communication;
- develop the vocabulary and the conventional skills necessary to communicate thoughts, ideas and opinions clearly and cogently in writing;
- provide a framework in which children with less competence and confidence in writing, can write with security and without fear of failure.

The pre-writing activities observed included:

- modelling: new vocabulary, use of conventions, sentences, paragraphing, linkage, sequence, opening and concluding sentences, genres, proof-reading;

- brainstorming: listing ideas, words, phrases, order, sequence, beginnings and endings, as well as questioning, challenging, changing, deleting and adding;
- listening: to readings, records, tapes, radio broadcasts, visiting writers and speakers of all kinds;
- viewing: films, videos, sound-slide sequences, posters, pictures and charts;
- teaching: short ten to fifteen minute spells, dealing with some aspect of writing which has emerged as a problem in previous writing, or needs clarification before the next piece of writing is commenced;
- discussing: objectives, approaches, and criteria for genres, formats, register, audience, conferencing and publishing;
- planning: focussing on questions such as: 'what do I want to say?', 'to whom do I want to say it?', 'in what form will I say it?';
- rehearsing: telling the story before writing it;
- researching: particularly for factual, non-fictional writing, related to social studies, science, thematic units and projects.

These pre-writing activities were undertaken in a range of situations: whole class, small groups, conference groups, free-choice groups, pairs and one-to-one with the teacher.

Modelling

I write a lot in my class and I believe it is extremely important, and I think too few teachers do, but again, it is something they can't be forced into ... Teacher modelling is important because you are providing, possibly, the best language model that they'll have that year, or maybe forever.

Teachers should model daily to show:

- the value of writing;
- all stages of the process;
- different genres;
- correct use of mechanics.

Although modelling is high among the priorities for writing of four of the teachers at this level, their approach to and practice of this aspect of the process, vary considerably.

In the case of the teacher working mainly with Maori and Pacific Islands children, the daily modelling of the diary is the core of her direct teaching programme as it relates to whole class teaching. In the story writing component of the writing programme, she also models the process, taking her stories through to publication and sharing the writing, through all its stages, with the pupils.

Another teacher models regularly once a week, on a Monday, and uses the modelling to demonstrate such things as the use of different genres, conventions or vocabulary. She selects the aspects to be modelled, but leaves the choice of topic for the modelling to the pupils.

Two of the five could be said to model daily in that they write along with their pupils during the 10 to 15 minutes of sustained silent writing which regularly follows the pre-writing activities. For both, this time is sacrosanct. However, for one, the process stops there and her writing is not shown to the pupils. For the other, the writing done during this time is frequently taken through all the stages of the process, even to being conferenced by pupils in the group conferencing phase. Her stories and poems sometimes feature in the various anthologies of pupils' published writing.

Because of his ambivalence about modelling, one teacher rarely models, and when he does, it bears little relationship to the concept as understood by Graves. He believes that, in his experience, modelling leads pupils to pattern their writing on the teacher's writing, and that pleasing the teacher becomes the objective, rather than the quality of the writing itself.

All the teachers at this level make considerable use of other writers' work - established writers, children's writing, newspaper features and articles - to motivate and stimulate or, as one teacher expressed it: 'to excite them to writing'.

Drafting

Drafting is regarded as an integral part of all writing and the kernel of the writing process. In all the classrooms, the teachers endeavour to 'withdraw' from the process during the sustained silent writing time. There is clearly an understanding among the pupils that, at this stage of the writing, they are on their own, with their ideas, and that the task of formulating them in writing belongs to the pupils. Nonetheless, teachers, even those engaged in their own personal writing, are ready to come to the rescue of any pupil with pressing problems. Generally, except for ESL pupils, such assistance is restricted to oral encouragement and the minimum of support required to get the writing started.

The routines established for drafting, in four of the classrooms, are similar:

1. drafting is done on loose or pad paper, using every second line to allow for proofreading, conference revision and crafting for publication purposes;
2. the use of a pencil is encouraged, with a biro being used for proofreading and any later alterations to the text. However, if a pupil prefers to draft in pen or biro, this is allowed and a coloured biro is used for alterations. Correcting fluid such as twink is not permitted and at the draft stage pupils are discouraged from using a rubber;
3. 'attempted' or 'approximated' spelling is still encouraged on the grounds that using a dictionary at this stage impedes the flow of the writing and reinforces the impression that spelling is more important than thought and the expression of ideas. However, such 'attempted' spelling is identified in some manner.

There are no hard and fast rules governing the retention of drafts beyond the stage of conferencing, although all the teachers suggest that they be kept as a means by which pupils can monitor their own development. It is interesting to note that drafts are more frequently retained by the more competent among the pupils.

In the classroom which makes a feature of daily diary writing, pupils use exercise books cut in half, with a wide margin down the left side of each page for teacher's comments and questions; these are taken up at the end of each writing period and are returned to pupils at the end of the day with corrections, comments, questions, and a targeted learning point, so that the children may take them

home for their parents or carers to read and sign. A similar strategy is used for story writing, except that in this case, the 'draft' booklet is organised to form a four-space spread; the top part being used for sketches to stimulate writing, to focus ideas, and to encourage sequencing.

Proofreading

All the teachers see proofreading as an essential part of the drafting phase and hence, in the first instance, the responsibility for proofing is the writer's. This is the pupil's opportunity to step out from the role of writer into that of reader. Therefore, in proofreading the draft, the child is encouraged to consider: 'does it make sense?', 'is the meaning clear?', 'is it interesting?'

In three of the classes, most of the children can check spelling by using a dictionary, and recognise simple errors in punctuation, such as correct use of full stops, capitals, question marks, speech marks, and the use of the comma to indicate a pause. At this stage, consistently correct use of the apostrophe seems beyond all but the most competent.

In the other two classrooms, proofreading skills, particularly among the confident and competent writers, are exceptionally well developed, and while the dictionary continues to be used to check the mechanics of spelling, pupils constantly resort to the thesaurus for more interesting or more precise vocabulary. In both these classrooms, some pupils use the computer's 'spell-check' facility to monitor their spelling errors and then check the dictionary for the correct spelling. In both these rooms, the teachers' concern is less for proofreading, i.e., 'the search for a correction of surface and mechanical errors', than for sub-editing, i.e., examining what has been written, the writer's purpose and audience, and the writing's form and expression.

The proofreading routines established in each classroom are essentially the same:

1. the pupil reads her own draft, aloud, inserting or altering punctuation to meet the criteria of sense and clarity, and checking spelling, including any 'attempted' or 'approximated' words;
2. the writing is then peer-proofed with a partner, using the same procedures. Sometimes, particularly with the competent writers in each room, the proofreading peer conference evolves into a crafting conference;

3. then the pupil either moves into a draft conference with the teacher or, as often happens with the more fluent writers, continues crafting the piece.

Proofreading, other than of elementary spelling and simple punctuation, appears to be beyond the present level of writing development of many of the emergent writers, particularly ESL pupils and those Maori and Pacific Islands children more at ease with oral forms of communication.

CONFERENCING TECHNIQUES

Conferencing is the key to the writer clarifying his/her ideas. Conferences are not a checking or a marking time. They help the writer reach the goal of his/her understandings. In the first instance the conference clarifies meaning.

In my conferencing I'm mainly dealing with the writer getting to grips with what they are trying to say and being able to say it clearly.

It is the quality of their conferencing techniques, above all, that singles out each of these teachers as effective teachers of writing.

Roving conferences

The roving conference is a positive response technique designed to motivate, encourage, affirm, and sustain pupils' writing.

In all five classrooms the specific objectives for roving conferences are as varied as the needs of the children in the class. Roving conferences take place at all stages of writing:

1. at the beginning: in response to teacher-initiated questions, for example: 'has anyone got a quick problem?', 'does anyone want a quick word about ideas?', 'is anyone having a problem that no-one else can solve?', 'does anyone want a pre-publishing conference?';
2. during the writing: in response to either a pupil's specific request for help or the teacher's perception of need;
3. towards the end of the writing period: to monitor what the pupils are doing and their stage of writing.

Roving conferences are particularly effective in assisting less able writers, ESL pupils, and those who feel uncomfortable with the more intensive interaction of a one-to-one conference with the teacher, taken in isolation from their peers. Also, for some Maori and Pacific Islands children, the roving conference is sometimes more culturally appropriate, in that these children often feel more secure and confident surrounded by their peers.

Generally, roving conferences are short, aimed at keeping the pupil on task without being too intrusive or over-directive. On occasion, if the problem is one that requires more than a quick word, the teacher sits or kneels alongside the pupil, listens to the problem, asks clarifying questions and offers suggestions, but the aim is always to help the pupils to find their own solutions and to leave the ownership of the writing to them. Sometimes with ESL pupils and those with special teaching or learning needs, the teacher will script a story in collaboration with the pupil.

Group conferences

When using group conferencing techniques, some differences are discernible among the teachers.

For two of the three with designated conference groups, their function is simply organisational. The group comes together on the mat, once a week, the pupils bringing with them whatever aspect of the writing they are currently engaged on. While they await their turn for an individual conference with the teacher, the pupils continue to draft or proofread, or, if they are at a stage where they need a conference before going further, they may read or do some other type of work. At the end of their personal time with the teacher, pupils are usually free to return to their places or to remain on the mat. Occasionally, when all the pupils in the group have been conferenced, some group sharing of writing may take place, but generally, sharing of writing occurs towards the end of the writing period, with the whole class as audience. In both these classes, the conference groups are organised according to whether the pupils are fluent and competent writers, confident but less competent writers, emergent writers, and, in one room, a small group of ESL pupils who are conferenced, both as a group and individually, for a few minutes each day.

In the third classroom, members of each group as well as the teacher take responsibility for the conduct of the conference so that it becomes a very effective form of peer conferencing. These groups are structured very carefully

to ensure that they are mixed according to ability and well balanced in relation to cultural and gender representation. The teacher firmly believes that children with language and writing difficulties, provided that they also have opportunities for individual conferences, and small group tuition focussed on specific needs, benefit from being in group situations with children who have greater confidence and competence in the use of both oral and written language.

The other two teachers do not use group conferences as a regular feature of their writing programme.

All the teachers believe in the value of using group conferencing techniques from time to time as a way of responding to children who share common problems or who have similar needs. While, as a general rule, these groups are called together because of problems noted either when the teacher has gone over drafts prior to conferencing, or during the conference itself, sometimes the groups are organised around children writing on comparable story-lines, using the same genre for their writing, or exploring similar ideas or themes.

Peer conferences

In their response to pupils' writing, all these teachers encourage constant pupil interaction, believing that, because of their common interests and shared difficulties as writers, children often facilitate each other's growth in confidence in many aspects of the writing process more than does the teacher. The only occasion considered inappropriate for such sharing is the time set aside for sustained silent writing.

Much of the peer conferencing that takes place in the classroom is informal and unstructured, allowing the pupils to decide both what they will share and with whom. Two 'rules' govern pupil interaction: in working together, pupils must be mindful of those drafting or doing work which demands a quiet atmosphere, and in conferencing each other's stories, poems or whatever, pupils need to remember that it is the writing, not the writer, which is being discussed. In practice, peer interaction covers the whole spectrum of writing, i.e., brainstorming ideas and topics for writing, proofreading, peer conferencing prior to a pupil's one-to-one conference with the teacher, sub-editing, ideas for publishing, and sharing writing, either in draft or published form. In the room with a high percentage of Maori and Pacific Island pupils, the security they experience in working together collaboratively is accepted and capitalised upon; again, the only 'rule' is consideration for others, i.e.,

the need to ensure to the child who wishes it, the 'quiet space' to write or work alone.

In three of the five classrooms, peer conferences were structured for some aspects of the writing process. In one of these, 'peer editors' are appointed to work with small groups of pupils to assist with the preparation of copy for publishing. These 'peer editors' are selected from among the more competent and confident writers in the class; they work in pairs, with each pair having as their responsibility a group of three other pupils, and individual pupils within the group may choose the 'peer editor' with whom they wish to work. Most of the surface errors are picked up in this way, and in some cases, the editing becomes quite sophisticated with changes in sequence, sentence structure, even genre, being suggested by two of these young editors.

In another classroom, 'buddy conferencing' is a feature of the writing programme. The 'buddy' is not a regular partner, but is generally a better writer; nor is the 'buddy conference' a mutual sharing, except when the better writers are together, or in a group-sharing situation. Theoretically, the choice of the 'buddy' is the pupil's but in practice the teacher:

makes sure that ... when they are doing their conferencing with a buddy ... they pick somebody who's going to keep them on track ... often you'll find that these [reluctant or diffident writers] group together.

In the 'buddy conference' the writer reads the story while the 'buddy' listens attentively; then the 'buddy' looks at the circled words and, together, the pupils correct spelling and other surface errors. When the pair are more evenly matched in confidence and competence as writers, the interaction becomes more concerned with style and expression but, following the example of their teacher, most pupils accept that the writer's ideas are outside the scope of their criticism, unless lacking in clarity.

In the third class, the regular weekly group conference takes the form of peer conferencing. together with the teacher, the pupils listen to each other talk about the piece of writing they would like to have conferenced, and share some of the problems they are having, or the things that they think are good about their writing; then the writer reads the draft, and the other members of the group ask questions and offer suggestions for ways in which the meaning might be made clearer, the story-line more interesting, the characterisation sharper

or the conversation more realistic. Only if the pupils seem unable to offer any help does the teacher intervene. The two peer conferences observed revealed a high degree of critical sophistication on the part of the students, who conducted the conference very courteously, questioning the writer and offering suggestions in a positive manner. After each pupil's turn for being conferenced in this manner, the teacher asks if any further help is needed with spelling, punctuation or format. If the pupil requires any assistance, the teacher makes a time to meet the child for an individual conference.

Individual conferences

For all five teachers observed in their classrooms at this level, the conferencing of individual pupils is the heart of the programme, when teachers respond to the child's interests, abilities and needs as a writer. For the majority of the pupils, too, the time spent in individual conferencing with the teacher is considered important. The individual conference gives the pupil an opportunity to work on the draft with the teacher, in an open, encouraging and supportive relationship, to clarify ideas and to express them appropriately. During the conference the child is acknowledged as a person whose ideas are valued. The sensitivity exercised by teachers in their response to the child's personal voice, and the respect shown for the individual's ownership of the writing, affirm the child's concept of self and increase personal self-esteem.

All these teachers aim to conference each pupil at least once a week, although with the more competent writers who are often engaged in longer pieces of writing, the conference may last no longer than it takes to check where the child is at with the writing, and if any help is needed. Where group conferences are scheduled on a regular weekly basis, the pupils are not restricted to this one opportunity for individual conferencing, but are encouraged to dialogue with the teacher whenever they feel a need to discuss their writing. Conversely, teachers respect the pupils' right to privacy and no child is pressured into an individual conference against her will. In the rare case where a child avoids the more formally constituted individual conference, the teacher interacts with this pupil during a roving conference.

Among these teachers there are few observable differences in the techniques used for conferencing. The pattern followed could be summarised as:

1. before the conference the child is expected to have proofread the draft, and indicated corrections by using a biro or coloured pen;

2. the pupil sits alongside the teacher in the mat area and together they discuss the topic and the ideas expressed in the writing, the pupil's objectives for the piece, the form of the story, poem, recollection of an experience, book review, or factual account, problems encountered in the writing (e.g., with the story-line, dialogue, characterisation, sequence, or ending), and suggestions made by peers;
3. the pupil reads the draft aloud while the teacher listens attentively, keeping an eye on the text in order to detect any discrepancies between the oral reading and the written text;
4. the teacher notes amendments made during the proofreading phase and these, along with any other irregularities in grammar, punctuation usage, vocabulary, paragraphing, are discussed with the pupil;
5. the pupil's intentions for the writing are discussed. If the child wishes to take the piece through to publication, then the format of the publication (i.e, booklet, good writing paper, chart, illustrations) is discussed with the child, although the initiative and responsibility for final decisions lie with the writer. If the pupil does not wish to take the piece any further, the child's rights as author are respected, and the ensuing discussion centres on the pupil's ideas for the next piece of writing. The only time the writer's decision not to do any further work on a given piece is challenged, is if the writing is part of a theme project, or something that the child has undertaken to do as part of a group activity;
6. at the conclusion of the conference, the teacher records the date, topic and suggestions given, in the pupil's running record.

Throughout the conference, the teachers' approaches to pupils are characterised by friendliness, acceptance and respect. In their response to the writing they are positive and affirmative, recognising its strengths positively, and offering constructive suggestions for improvement. It is the skill that they bring to the conferencing phase of the writing process, that makes each of these teachers so effective in developing their pupils' competence and confidence as writers.

PUBLICATION

Once [the children] take something through to publishing they present it to the whole class, then it goes up on display and is read constantly. Every now and again, in reading time, I have to direct children away from their own classmates' writing because they are happy to read it every day.

They find the most satisfying reward for a piece of good work is retelling it to the class ... whereby the class gathers on the mat as they would when they listen to me.

Although all teachers accept that in teaching writing, the process is more important than the product, they all agree that the publication of their work offers children an invaluable incentive for writing, and that positive, affirmative feedback from a reading audience, particularly from their peers, is the response most influential in stimulating the pupil to further writing. However, not all writing is published, and while some children, either from lack of confidence in the value of their own writing, or from a desire to get started on something new, need encouragement from the teacher to take a piece of writing through to a final product, the decision to publish, ultimately, remains with the pupil.

Audience

At this stage of their development, the most common audience for children's writing is the peer community of the classroom. Therefore, to help pupils establish criteria by which they evaluate the relevance and appropriateness of their writing to the target audience, teachers ask questions such as:

- Would you enjoy reading this story if someone else had written it?
- Do you think your story-line will interest other children in the class?
- Do you talk like the people in your story?

- If you didn't know anything about this subject, would this piece of writing tell you all you want to know?
- When you shared this story with 'X' did she think it was exciting, interesting, scary, boring, funny, sad...?

As well as being themselves enthusiastic readers of the children's writing, all the teachers try to gain as wide an audience as possible for their pupils' writing. Every opportunity is sought to share children's writing with:

- parents and families;
- the principals and other teachers in the school;
- pupils from other syndicates.

Pupils' writing is also shared with teachers from other schools in in-service courses, and is used to help Teachers' College trainees establish ideas about children's writing, and to help them set realistic goals for and objectives by which to evaluate children's writing.

Oral sharing

Throughout the processes associated with writing (i.e., pre-writing activities, drafts, proofreading, conferencing, sub-editing, illustrating, publishing, children are encouraged to share their ideas and problems with others in the class. Such sharing, whether of a segment, a whole draft, or the published version, is considered integral to writing. For most pupils, except during sustained, silent writing, the murmur of children's voices is the background against which their writing is composed.

Much of this oral sharing takes place informally, but in all classrooms a time is set aside daily for the pupils who wish to 'face the audience', to read aloud to the whole class something that they have written. In one class, the importance of this activity is underlined for the children by having a 'Writer's Chair', in which the child who wishes to share her writing with the class, sits and reads her story, and then fields questions posed by the other pupils.

The many opportunities children have for sharing their work, either in its draft or published form, in either structured or unstructured situations, in partner, group or whole class settings, are occasions when pupils develop many of the attitudes and skills necessary to both readers and writers. Moreover, peer feedback may be of greater value to the writer than the evaluation which takes place during conferencing.

Through sharing their writing with others, pupils:

- are motivated and given incentives to keep on task and to persevere with the writing;
- discover, through the responses and reactions of the peer group to the writing shared, what makes stories relevant and interesting to an audience;
- develop, through practice, both the skills necessary for critical evaluation of writing, and ways in which criticism can be communicated with sensitivity and respect for others;
- learn to listen attentively and respond positively to other pupils' reactions to their writing;
- develop an awareness of and respect for differing points of view, ways of expression, cultural practice and response in relation to writing;
- gain confidence in sharing their ideas through writing, and in expressing these ideas in their own voice;
- learn to own their own writing and to take responsibility for it;
- gather new ideas for writing.

In the largely Maori and Pacific Islands classroom, the teacher sees the sharing of children's 'publications' as a major means of building relationships with the pupil's home and the school. That parents and care givers respond well to these initiatives is reflected in the many 'publications' that they, in return, have written for the class, and which form an important reading resource for the pupils.

Publication and editing

Among these five teachers, a common policy exists in relation to proofreading and editing. While both are considered elements of revision, a clear distinction is made between their functions. Proofreading, or checking writing to remove mistakes in spelling, punctuation, or surface conventions, is seen, in so far as the child's development as a writer will allow, as the pupil's responsibility. Editing, or the drafting of the writing in relation to expression and style, is the teacher's responsibility. While all drafts are proofread, only writing which the child decides to take to the final stage of the process (i.e., publication) is edited. Also, so that the pupil can learn from the editing exercise, it is done in collaboration with the child to retain the writer's voice and to leave the responsibility for accepting any alterations to the child, ensuring that the ownership of the writing remains with the writer.

In reviewing their own work either by themselves, or with a peer partner or group, or in the general sharing sessions, pupils are encouraged to look not only for surface errors, but to evaluate the appropriateness of style and expression to the topic and to the audience. Through the processes associated with self and peer evaluation, such as:

- checking the dictionary for spelling,
- searching the thesaurus for synonyms,
- reading the writing aloud to test the accuracy and appropriateness of the punctuation adopted,
- considering the audience feedback received through sharing the draft,

the pupil's awareness of ways in which the writing can be fine-tuned increases, as does the confidence to undertake some aspects of the revision, unaided by the teacher. Although many writers at the Standard Four level are as yet unable to edit to this degree of sophistication, it is the goal towards which the teachers are moving, and any efforts on the part of a pupil, to attempt this form of sub-editing, are responded to with praise and encouragement.

Once a pupil has decided to publish, is satisfied with the ideas and content of the story, poem or whatever constitutes the piece of writing, and has proof-read or sub-edited the writing, the revised draft is then given to the teacher and an 'editing conference' takes place. The principles for editing as established by these teachers, are very similar:

- the pupil must be involved in and understand the reasons behind any corrections and alterations made to the text;
- editing is concerned with form, style and expression, with the focus not on what is said but on how it is expressed;
- in editing every effort must be made to ensure that the child's voice is heard, and that the writer's ownership of the final product is maintained;
- the requirement that publications be error free is seen as a way of increasing children's confidence, and of reinforcing a sense of personal pride in their achievements as writers.

Understood in this way, editing becomes an effective method through which teachers respond positively and affirmatively to pupils' writing.

Other features of writing discussed with the pupil at this stage are presentation and illustrations. Though all may not share the dislike of one teacher for writing stapled to a wall, they would agree with him that, wherever possible, the form in which the writing is presented to the reader, and the illustrations which accompany it, should be appropriate to the nature of the writing.

Children's published writing is presented in a variety of ways: in booklets and folders, on tapes and charts, as part of a thematic project, as wall-hangings and mobiles, as 'shape' books, posters, hand-made books, and in class anthologies organised around a common theme. The possibilities are wide-ranging. While, in general, publications are hand-written, sometimes the script is typed by a co-operative teacher-assistant or parent-helper, and increasingly, as word-processors become more readily available to the children themselves, they are used not just for publishing purposes but also for drafting.

EVALUATION

In any assessment of children's writing, and in any evaluation of the efficacy of the classroom writing programme as it relates to the individual child, the language and cultural heritage that each pupil brings to the classroom, as well as each one's interests, abilities, weaknesses and needs as a writer, are the bases on which the assessment and evaluation rest.

Objectives

All these teachers believe that for assessment to be an effective tool for the development of writing, its objectives must be:

- child specific: based on the needs of each individual pupil, in relation to where each one is at in the writing process;
- task specific: based on the specific criteria established for each piece of writing.

Objectives need to address such questions as:

- what does the child want to say?;
- to whom does the child want to say it?;
- in what form is it said?

Or, put another way, is the child able to communicate and express in writing an idea, a message, a feeling, or an emotion, in a way which:

- satisfies the child?
- is clear to the reader?
- conforms with the conventions of the genre being used?

Other important factors taken into account by these teachers in the assessment of pupils' writing include:

1. establishing clear criteria for each specific writing task, sometimes in collaboration with the child;
2. assessing each piece of writing in relation to both the specific objectives and criteria set for each writing task, and the pupil's personal objectives for writing as established during conferencing;
3. developing the child's own ability to self-assess and self-evaluate as the principal objective of all processes of writing;
4. the acquisition of peer and group evaluation skills;
5. on-going assessment based on objectives set for the child at each stage of the writing process.

In observing these five teachers working with their pupils, it is very evident that one of the qualities that makes them so effective in responding to pupils' writing is the principles of assessment which they adopt.

Feedback

[Children]... tend to make very objective criticisms and they tend to have this great desire to help each other and they're always positive. Also they can be that much more honest than I feel I can be because children tend to take it from other children ... they would be quite put off if I were to say: 'it's boring', or 'you go on too long'.

[Feedback is] ... generally oral comment. I always read their material before a conference so I make notes myself, mainly because of the very short time limit. Then the feedback comes from the conference group: the other children. Then some children will share in the sharing time so the feedback would come from the whole class, and then, if they decide to take it right through to publishing, they read their story, show their illustrations, and then there is a comment session... through a lot of role-modelling we've got it down to being always positive... at that stage negative comments are of no value because the piece of writing is finished.

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I write the comments in the way that (a) they see me as being human; (b) I look at their background, I look at the type of person they are and try to think of a comment, a way of evaluating their work that means something just to them: for example, 'a very strong and honest editorial ... I agree with you totally'; 'Your graphics are outstanding! A tree at last!'

Throughout the writing process, from the brainstorming with which it often begins, to the draft, through to the publication stage, all teachers encourage pupils to give oral feedback to each other, in the belief that the feedback the writer receives from the peer group makes the pupil not only aware of the importance of audience response, but also acts as an incentive for further writing.

Most teacher feedback is also oral. While pupils are actually drafting, feedback is generally restricted to the brief passing comment aimed at encouraging, stimulating and sustaining the writing. When conferencing the draft, teachers' feedback, in the form of questions, suggestions and comments, is targeted at the actual text: its meaning, story-line, clarity, and success as a piece of communication. It is at this stage of the writing that the feedback is specific to the piece of writing, and teachers are careful to commend words, phrases, opening sentences, small segments, paragraphs, images, descriptions, characterisations and dialogue, that are particularly effective. At the same time, they also give positive feedback on those areas of the writing that appear less successful, but in such a way that the child retains a positive attitude towards writing. At the pre-publishing phase feedback is generally concerned with the fine-tuning of writing associated with the editing process.

In their attitudes to written feedback, teachers differ in approach. Two very rarely give written feedback, on either draft or published writing: when they do, it is confined to a brief reminder in the margin, about aspects of punctuation or spelling. Of the others, one only gives written feedback at the time of the editing conferences, and when marking the principal's 'assessment' test of the children's writing skills.

The teacher working, in the main, with Maori and Pacific Islands children makes considerable use of written feedback. Comments are generally very specific and, where appropriate, questions are challenging, aimed at motivating children to further thought: for example: 'Please go back and read a paragraph at a time. Proofread in pen so that I can see you have done it. Think of information

you can add as well'. Comments and questions written in the margin of the daily diary, are designed as much to get feedback from the home as to give feedback to the child, and the dialogue that is set up between the teacher and the home is very effective in promoting better understanding of what the teacher is trying to do in her classroom. Although she does not write on publications, a space is provided at the back of each booklet where she, as well as parents and pupils, can write a 'reader's' comment. These responses are always affirming and encouraging.

The fifth teacher gives written feedback on drafts, directed at clarifying ideas, questioning meaning, reminding the writer of purpose and audience, but always with the aim of motivating and assisting the pupil. Comments are 'child-friendly' and couched positively in language to which the pupil can respond: for example: '"Speech marks are needed for conversation", said Mr D'; [on a story about a machine] 'Sounds foolproof, but I had to read this in one breath because your machine appears to have gobbled FULL STOPS!'. Although comments are not usually written on published work, when the product is a project or a longer assignment, marks out of 15 are given for creativity and presentation. Apart from this type of publication, neither he nor any of the other teachers at this level use either marks or grades as a way of responding to pupils' writing.

Checklists and records

Although the five teachers have used checklists in the past, all but one no longer feels that they are appropriate to the process approach to writing, in which evaluation and assessment are concerned more with encouraging writing, than judging a finished product. For two of these teachers, their attitudes towards checklists are not shared by their principals, and therefore a compromise has had to be made. With the teachers keeping some form of checklist, but one devised with each pupil, and worked out on the basis of individual need. In practice, there is little difference between what is done by these two teachers and the one teacher who uses a checklist based on the headings: 'I can use...', 'I know when to ... where to ...', 'I am beginning to use ...', to note pupils' mastery of the conventions of writing. In his view, the value of this simple form of checklist is in reinforcing a child's sense of achievement by pointing out skills mastered or, conversely, to draw attention to careless errors.

For four of these teachers, including the one who uses checklists, of far more importance as an information base against which to check each pupil's development, is the ongoing profile that is kept for each pupil. It is referred to by various titles but its purpose is the same; to describe a pupil's specific strengths and weaknesses as a writer and, through keeping a record of each individual conference, to monitor development, progress and achievements, as they occur throughout the year.

As a general rule the writing record includes:

1. pre-conference comments:
 - points noted during roving conferences,
 - points noted during the pre-conferencing reading of the draft;
2. conference comments:
 - date of conference,
 - topic and genre of writing,
 - pupil's proofreading skills,
 - strengths,
 - weaknesses,
 - suggestions made by teacher,
 - issues raised by pupil,
 - next step: if the pupil decides to take the draft through to publication, suggested strategies are recorded, or if the pupil wishes to begin a new draft, then the proposed topic/ideas are noted;
3. pre-publication conference comments:
 - date of conference,
 - revisions made by pupil since the draft conference,
 - major drafting changes made by teacher and accepted by the writer;
4. post-publication comments:
 - these relate to the teacher's assessment of the completed product and sometimes include a comment about audience response.

These individual records are available to the children and to any parent who wishes to see them. They also form the basis of any summary records required by the school administration, or of any written reports sent out to parents.

One teacher does not use this system. In fact, she keeps no written record of children's development as writers. Her reasons for this are expressed thus:

I actually used to keep a book. I don't do that any more because I found I didn't need to, because you work with the children every day. I suppose I'm meant to do it but I don't. You know where you are in working with children; you know the things you've gone over; you've got the previous drafts. At the beginning of the year, I do keep notes on the children because I don't know them, I don't know what they are doing - that's to remind myself. But I'd say that after six weeks, no, I don't keep notes.

At the end of each term, however, she does review each child's abilities and achievements as a writer. The headings used for this exercise are: grammar, spelling, punctuation, fluency and techniques.

ASSISTANCE AND INTERVENTION

Under this heading are included comments concerning the general principles governing teachers' attitudes towards intervention and assistance, as well as references to their approaches to spelling, punctuation, grammar, voice and ownership of writing.

General principles

I'm actually more at the end of the chain than at the beginning of the chain. I don't find a great deal of need [to intervene] at the beginning ... lots of things happen in the middle regarding them and their peers ... and they really enjoy the sharing idea - 'let's just see the sort of introductions we have at the moment' - 'let's just see how you got started'. Then there's a period when it's just them writing, not a lot involved with me at all, just roving, and there is the end where I would have the most involvement.

I think [it is important] to intervene if the need is there, but I think I probably put a lot of weight on the actual conferencing stage and the questioning of content, so children have the opportunity to really clarify what they are trying to say. ... I only interact with my conference group which is a set group of children every day ... It would be very occasionally that I would have to go over if someone looks like they're having problems.

I don't see myself as intervening ... we are all interacting. It's a sharing thing. ... I see it as varying from child to child.

Among the many qualities that contribute to the effectiveness of these teachers in responding to pupils' writing are their awareness and sensitivity to pupils' individual needs, and their ability to stand aside, allowing pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, within a framework that gives scope to more confident writers to explore and experiment, and to the diffident and less able the security of knowing that, should they need it, help is always

near at hand. In general their approach to intervention is to give assistance and support whenever it is needed.

Throughout the process, except for the editing stage and where ESL pupils are concerned, assistance is predominantly oral in nature. Usually it is conveyed indirectly through comments and questions. However, with ESL and emergent writers, assistance is always direct and explicit.

Areas in which assistance is given vary, not only from child to child but from one piece of writing to the next. With ESL pupils and those whose basic language competencies are limited, assistance covers every aspect of writing: choice of topic, ordering and sequencing of ideas, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, grammar, drafting, revision, and publishing. When interacting with Maori and Pacific Islands pupils, particular attention is given to encouraging them to express themselves in writing, in a manner comparable to the way in which they use oral language. With the more competent and confident writers, assistance is more often related to style and to the development of skills of drafting and editing.

One aspect of writing in which all teachers give direct help - through modelling and using other writers as models, through whole class and small group teaching, as well as through conferencing - is the introduction and development of different genres of writing. When, for a particular writing activity, children are directed towards the use of a specific genre, all teachers observed at this level set out clearly and discuss fully the objectives and criteria to be observed during the writing. Throughout the drafting and conferencing stages of their writing pupils' attention is kept focussed on the register and conventions of writing appropriate to the genre being used.

Spelling

While all the teachers observed in their classrooms at this level agree that spelling is important and that it should not be neglected, all feel that too great an emphasis on correct spelling during the early phases of the writing process only serves to inhibit the child's imagination and to impede the spontaneous flow of ideas.

Practices observed in all classrooms include:

1. at the drafting or rehearsal stage of the writing, children are encouraged to use invented or attempted spelling methods for words which they don't know how to spell. At this stage of the process, getting started and the flow of ideas are the priorities, not accuracy of spelling;
2. prior to conferencing, pupils are expected to proofread their draft for spelling irregularities, using a dictionary. The checking of spelling is also one of the activities undertaken in peer conferencing;
3. during the conference, the teacher goes through the draft, checking the spelling errors picked up by the writer during proofreading, and noting others that may have been overlooked or not recognised as errors. After discussing these with the pupil, the words are then added to the child's personal spelling list for later learning;
4. publications are expected to be error free with correct spelling, but while the responsibility for editing is seen to be the teacher's, pupils are expected to take responsibility for mastering the correct spelling of all the words used in their writing;
5. although, in the time set aside for writing, spelling is not taught in isolation, new words that occur in the course of pre-writing activities are generally written on the blackboard or overhead projector, and pupils' attention is drawn to the correct spelling;
6. the importance of dictionary skills is emphasised and pupils are also encouraged to use the thesaurus;
7. while for ESL and bilingual pupils, misspelt words are always written out in full in the margin, for other pupils a code is sometimes used to indicate errors.

Punctuation

When it comes to something like speech marks or things like that, I now feel quite happy about giving an introduction to the whole class, pointing out why we use them, when we use them, because I feel that only those who are ready will take it on board, the others won't. And I am convinced that it doesn't confuse them... so I will introduce different things, like that, sometimes to a class, sometimes to a group, but then I would work with the individual, generally at the point of need.

In developing pupils' punctuation skills, the strategies used by the teachers are very similar to those used for spelling. The emphasis is on punctuation as a clarifier of meaning, and as a signpost to the reader of where to pause, where to stop and when to take a new direction.

At the proofreading stage, pupils are encouraged to read their draft aloud, to listen to how they read, and to take their clues for commas, question marks, exclamation marks, full stops and capitals from the pauses and emphases they hear in their own voice. They are encouraged to do the same thing when they are being conferenced, whether by their peers or the teacher.

However, whereas the teaching of spelling as it relates to writing is mostly incidental, with punctuation the teaching is often planned, and lessons are taught, either to the whole class, or to small groups when several children are experiencing similar problems. Modelling is another means by which teachers assist pupils to master the skills of punctuation.

Grammar

Grammar is treated in a similar way to spelling and punctuation; that is, oral assistance is given during drafting and conferencing and, when considered appropriate, either whole class or small group teaching is given on specific points or grammatical conventions.

All the teachers agree that grammar is a difficult area in relation to writing. The issue is a delicate one and the teachers concerned are very sensitive to cultural differences. All feel that the assistance most appropriate to all children is that which comes through modelling and conferencing.

Voice and ownership

I am currently very interested in Graves's ideas. I find his emphasis on pupils' 'choice' and 'voice' very interesting and his ideas extend way beyond writing.

[Diary writing is about] ... the children's life ... this is what is happening and it's certainly giving them a basis for writing that is meaningful and easy for them to write about.

[Children need to see] ... a value for what they write, that it and they are accepted, that what they write has value and that people are going to read it and say 'gee, that was good'.

[Publication is important:] ... one of the reasons seems to be that there is a cover on it, and it's very personal and you are sitting back there with it and it's yours, and it's yours to either keep or share.

At this stage of their development, children are beginning to be influenced by peer pressures and the need to conform. Recognising this, the teachers believe that pupils need to be given opportunities to write of their own experiences, of the things that are important to them and in ways that have meaning for them.

The teachers at this level also believe firmly that teaching writing through emphasis on different aspects of the writing process, with the focus on free choice concerning topic, genre, sharing, publication and presentation, allows the child's individuality and personality to emerge. It gives children the security needed to express their own ideas, beliefs, opinions, and feelings without fear and without constraint. These teachers believe that if children are given opportunities to explore their ideas, to try them out on others, if they are given the skills to proofread their own writing, and if the decisions concerning conferencing, sharing, publishing and the like, are given over to them, then children will take responsibility for their own writing, and will gain both confidence and competence as writers. It is in the recognition, acceptance and affirmation they give to each child's personal voice, and in the acknowledgement of pupil's responsibility for and ownership of the writing, that these teachers respond most effectively to pupils' writing.

CHAPTER SIX: WRITING AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF AND APPROACHES TO WRITING

I see writing as the centre of my whole programme and of every activity ... and the sharing of children's writing in every area, as of utmost importance in the classroom.

[Writing is] ... just the basis for all my work, whether it be something that I want to get on to later in an oral or drama sense; it might be for a video, it might be for a straight audience in class, or it might be for a syndicate assembly: I find that to do that, pen and paper are always necessary.

Most of my work is based around writing ... Writing is very important and the children like to write ... Anything we do, whether it be plays, trips, whatever we do, there's always some writing involved in it.

In this syndicate we try to totally integrate it [i.e., writing] so we try not to distinguish periods of time.

Personally, as a teacher, writing is first. But writing depends on children's knowledge of and care with language. It is a skill I try to teach them individually.

That the five teachers selected for observation at the Form One to Two level work in very different types of schools makes very little difference to their views of and approaches to writing. Two teach in South Island urban intermediates, with predominantly pakeha pupils, one in a rural Form One to Seven school with nearly 50 per cent Maori pupils, one in a North Island urban intermediate where approximately 50 per cent of the pupils are of Maori and Pacific Islands descent and one in an urban integrated Form One to Seven girls' school in which over 90 per cent of the pupils are pakeha. All see writing as a process through which children interact with their own ideas and communicate with others; all see writing as a tool for learning; all see the teacher's role to be one of encouragement, support, guidance and affirmation for children's efforts to

express themselves (whether experiences, ideas, beliefs, opinions, or feelings) through writing for which the principal audience is themselves or, if they so choose, a wider audience of interested readers, both in and beyond the classroom.

Classroom practices and writing processes endorsed by all the teachers, and common to all five classrooms include:

1. establishing appropriate practices for writing, the continuity of which provides security and an environment of trust in which pupils feel free to take risks;
2. opportunities for daily, uninterrupted writing on the grounds that writing takes time and needs a period of sustained silence that allows writers the space to withdraw inside their own mind and to get in touch with their own imagination, thoughts and emotions;
3. freedom of personal choice in the selection of topics and ideas for writing. This practice allows pupils to have control over and ownership of their writing, so that their voice can be heard and their ideas, views and feelings can be expressed;
4. pre-writing activities, using a variety of language modes (e.g., drama, role-play, viewing, watching, reading, listening, researching, art, craft, oral discussion, and brainstorming) and a range of structures (i.e., whole class, small group, pair, teacher-designated or free choice groupings). Writing needs preparation and through sharing their ideas and experiences among themselves, children are stimulated to write. Pre-writing activities are seen as particularly relevant for less competent and confident writers whose difficulties in writing often stem from feelings of inadequacy, not about ideas, but about the language needed to express them;
5. drafting, for the pupil, is the crucial phase of the process, for all the other phases depend upon it. While it is seen as important for children to experience for themselves the process by which thoughts, ideas, and feelings are translated into words on paper, teachers are ready to offer encouragement and suggestions when needed;

6. proofreading their draft before conferencing with the teacher is regarded as an essential part of the process. It enables the child to take personal responsibility for the writing, and in sharing proofreading with a trusted peer partner or group, the child experiences the first public feedback on what up till then has been 'private' writing. Also, at this stage of their development children often respond more positively to peer feedback;
7. the teacher's individual conference with the child enables the teacher to interact on a personal basis, to target individual interests, abilities and needs, to explore the draft with the child, and to make corrections or offer suggestions, specific to the child and the writing;
8. daily sharing of writing, whether in draft or publication form, and feedback from the peer audience, reinforces the teacher's feedback and increases pupils' confidence and competence as writers;
9. publication, presentation and sharing of writing with an audience gives the writing added value and is an affirmation of the child's voice in, and ownership of, the writing.

All the teachers see the process approach (discussion, draft, proofreading, peer conferencing, teacher conferencing and publication) as an effective way in which to respond to children's needs as writers.

For the child, the strengths of the writing process as outlined above, could be summarised as follows:

1. because the content of the writing is seen to come from within the child (i.e., thoughts, ideas, experiences, interests, opinions and feelings) the child sees writing as relevant to her as a person, and therefore accepts responsibility for it;
2. children enjoy writing, and in sharing the writing of their peers, begin to understand the relationship between writer and reader, and therefore, between writing and reading;

3. through the encouragement and support given to their writing by teachers, and from the feedback received from their peers and other readers, children begin to value their own ideas as being of interest and importance to others. As a consequence, they gain greater confidence in writing in their own voice and take pride in owning their own writing;
4. this approach to writing is seen as of value for Maori and Pacific Islands children as it enables them to write from their own cultural background. Also, the way in which the writing programme is structured, enables them to work with, and share their ideas and drafts with others of their own culture;
5. through the language activities associated with pre-writing, discussion and sharing, children with limited English language competencies are exposed to a wider range of vocabulary and languaging skills than would be available to them through the more traditional approaches to the teaching of writing.

From the perspective of the teachers, the strengths of the writing process are that:

1. it provides, through conferencing, ideal opportunities for the teacher to relate teaching to pupils' learning, emotional and personal needs;
2. it enables the teacher to relate the teaching and learning of spelling, punctuation, grammar and genres, to the individual's current stage of development, and allows flexibility to group children together, when appropriate, or to discuss common problems with the whole class when desirable;
3. it assures quality teaching time for ESL pupils, and those children who need structures for learning that are more appropriate to their cultural ways of learning, than the traditional structures of a largely pakeha system.

However, while these teachers value the process approach to writing, they all express concern for some aspects of its implementation:

1. separation of what is called 'process writing' from other types of writing and from the rest of the classroom programme. According to these teachers, the processes explored in more depth in the period set aside daily for writing, are relevant to writing of every kind and across all areas of the curriculum;
2. use of the terms 'rough' and 'good' or 'final' copy among some teachers diminishes the importance of the draft which, for many, is the goal of the process;
3. over-emphasis on imaginative and expressive writing. This can isolate the writing 'done' in the time set aside for writing, from other aspects of writing, and can lead to poor attitudes towards the more factual, or investigatory types of writing;
4. over-modelling (setting up the 'model' as something to be imitated) can limit children's individuality as writers, and threaten the emergence of their own voice through their writing. In the case of Maori and Pacific Islands children, over-emphasis on the 'model', can lead to feelings of incompetence and undermine confidence;
5. writing from a 'stone-cold' position. 'Warm-ups' for writing, for example, language activities, role-play, discussion and sharing are required and, where the genre or topic has been established by the teacher, discussion of the objectives and criteria of that genre or topic are needed;
6. over-direction concerning the topic or ideas for writing. Writing is regarded as a personal and creative activity and pupils need the freedom to write about things that interest them; on the other hand, total free choice of topic at all times can limit pupils' writing development. In this respect the writing programme needs to be balanced between pupil-choice and teacher-designated topics, with the weighting in the child's favour;
7. allowing pupils to peer-proofread, peer-conference, peer-edit, without the benefit and security of clear guidelines for such interaction;

8. over-intrusion, or intervention into the child's writing. While it is important to help pupils when assistance is required, teachers need to recognise that the ideas in the writing belong to the pupil, and to guard against encroaching upon pupils' voice and ownership.

The approach of these teachers towards the teaching of writing is well expressed by one of their number when she says:

I don't attempt to teach writing at class level, because the children are so varied. I try to bring the best from them. And although this process is often very long and very slow, I believe that, in the end, you see the benefits through the improvements they have made.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The primary quality of the learning environment is a warm and supportive atmosphere. In such an atmosphere, one can afford to take a risk, experiment with ideas, and materials, and even make mistakes.

Another component of a conducive learning atmosphere is animation. Animation can be pursued by providing a variety of realia, pictures, books, materials, activities, audio-visuals, to stimulate ideas and discussion. The display of children's work is also an important ingredient. It gives both purpose and pleasure to children and helps create a visual 'learning workshop' atmosphere.

The above extract, taken from one of the schools' language schemes could well be a description of the environment that characterises each of the five classrooms at this level. Even though two of the rooms were too small for the classes which occupied them, and in one, the school's organisational structure limited the teacher's freedom to arrange the classroom as she would have liked, a happy, relaxed atmosphere pervaded each room. In all but one case, the children obviously regarded the classroom as their own space. Because of the school's policy of allocating rooms on a subject rather than a class basis, this sense of home-base was lacking in the rural Form One to Seven classroom; however, the atmosphere created by the teacher's warm personality helped overcome the rigid rows of desks and the room's lack of child-centredness.

In the four home-base rooms the visual impact was one of colour and vitality. Children's work was displayed in diverse ways and in every available space: it covered the walls, hung from the ceiling, and was stuck to windows in the form of posters, masks, mobiles, cartoons, table displays and three-dimensional objects. In the room where over 50 per cent of the children were Maori or of Pacific Islands origin, the multi-cultural nature of the class was reflected in the display of cultural taonga, and in the pupils' art and craft work.

Another way in which teachers respond effectively to the needs of writing as a subject and to pupils as writers, is in the organisation of classroom space. In each of the four class-based rooms, space is organised to meet the children's need for variety, interest and activity-based learning. In all but one of these rooms, the mat area is the central feature of the learning environment where most whole class and small group teaching and discussion take place. In each case the mat was made comfortable with cushions and sofas. In the fourth of these rooms, overcrowding made the retention of a mat area impossible, but whenever activities need a desk-free space, the teacher takes the children outside the classroom to the garden, library, or hall.

Other features common to all four rooms include:

- a reading corner: well resourced with books, magazines, class readers, listening post, boxes of reading resource material. In each case, the link between reading and writing is evidenced by the inclusion of the pupils' own writing among the books and resources on display, and available for borrowing;
- a science area: with both wall and table displays, shelves for the storage of simple scientific equipment and resources. Again, the link with writing is apparent in the display of pupils' science-related writing;
- an art and craft area: generally well stocked with paper, paints, scissors, paste, and all the oddments associated with activities such as collage, screen printing and the like. As the displayed work showed the relationship between visual and verbal expression and communication is very strong.

In only one room - the multicultural room - is there a computer. As this is a very recent acquisition, its potential for writing has not been fully explored.

In the remaining room, the only feature softening the environment, apart from the teacher's warm personality, is the reading corner with its books and display of magazines and reading-material.

If teachers' attitudes to teaching and learning can be deduced from the ways in which they respond to the potential of space, insight into their approach to children as learners can be gained from observing how they organise the pupils in their classroom.

In two of the rooms, the pupil's place is designated by the teacher; in one of these, where the desks have storage space and the room is overcrowded, specified seating is the teacher's way of dealing with the security and storage problems within the classroom; when they are working in the classroom the children are free to sit where and with whom they wish. In the other room where the pupils' places are designated, the teacher follows school policy, which also suggests that boys and girls sit in alternate rows. In another room, children's seating is negotiated with the teacher. Generally the pupils choose their place, but if the teacher feels that the choice is not conducive to either the child's or others' learning, he will intervene. In the other classrooms, the children choose where to sit on the understanding that their freedom to sit or work where they like will be curtailed, if they do not conform to the teachers' expectations of appropriate classroom behaviour.

None of the teachers uses regular ability-level groups for writing or conferencing because of their belief in the personal nature of writing and the need for children to develop their own individual style, to write in their own voice, to own their own writing and to take responsibility for it. However, group learning and peer interaction feature in all classrooms. Some of the practices observed are outlined below:

- in two classrooms, most group work is associated with theme or project work. The groups are teacher-designated and organised to include a range of writing, reading, and artistic skills, and in one classroom, to achieve a gender balance as well;
- in all classrooms, small group teaching occurs when pupils' writing indicates errors and problems common to more than one or two children. Similar practices are followed to extend more able writers and to assist ESL writers;
- free-choice groups are often used for the activities associated with pre-writing, as well as for proofreading, sharing and publishing. Such groups are often pupil-generated rather than teacher-suggested and occur during all phases of the writing time;

- in one classroom a 'buddy' system works effectively. The 'buddy trio' (grouped according to abilities in reading, mathematics and spelling) conference each other rigorously in all phases of the writing, prior to individual conferences with the teacher;
- in the multicultural classroom, pair/peer groups are used informally and are usually pupil generated. The teacher does not enforce rigid group practices because she believes that the cultural tendencies of these children are towards co-operative learning and sharing, and that this happens best when it is encouraged and allowed, not regulated or enforced;
- in the rural Form One to Seven school classroom, the fact that Form Two pupils are considered part of the secondary system and follow the timetable structured for all but Form One pupils, results in a very structured approach to classroom practice, since all the activities associated with language (i.e., reading, writing, spelling, conventions and usage) have to be covered in the four hours assigned to English.

An important dimension of responsive teaching is the quality of the relationships within the classroom. In all five cases, the teacher-pupil relationships are positive. All teachers show warmth and understanding towards their pupils. They appear genuinely interested in and concerned for them, both as individuals and learners. While very aware of the cultural, social and emotional characteristics, as well as of the interests and attitudes, common to this age group, they treat each pupil as an individual and give generously of their time to each one.

Consequently, pupils have great confidence in their teachers and appreciate their strengths, not just as teachers but as friends and supporters.

Not surprisingly, given the classroom environments and the teachers' attitudes, pupils' relationships within the classroom are characterised by courtesy and consideration. They work well together, seem very supportive of each others' efforts and appear to take delight in the successes experienced by their peers. In one of the rooms where the standard of work was unusually high and the writing, in particular, quite sophisticated in its mastery of style and language, there was a healthy spirit of emulation in the classroom and this gave the group as a whole an added sense of purpose and direction.

THE WRITING PROCESS

That writing is a process is clearly understood by all these teachers; likewise all strongly believe that writing is a tool for learning about oneself and one's world, and a tool for communication with oneself, as well as with others. But equally they agree that writing, like every other area of learning and communication, must have a set of clear-cut, easily defineable objectives, both to govern its direction and to keep it on course.

This section deals, firstly, with a summary of the objectives established by these teachers for their writing programmes and, secondly, with what one teacher calls the 'rehearsal' stages of the process (choice of topic, pre-writing activities, modelling, drafting and proofreading). The other phases of the process (conferencing, editing, evaluation and other aspects of writing relevant to its teaching) will be covered in later sections.

Objectives

Although each teacher expresses the objectives set for the classroom writing programme in different ways, the similarities far outweigh the differences.

These objectives include:

- providing the environment, classroom structures and types of in-class relationships, which will give children the security and confidence necessary to write well;
- teaching the skills necessary for writing such as drafting, proof-reading and revision;
- providing daily opportunities for children to express their own thoughts, feelings and experiences in writing;

- providing sufficient stimulation to arouse children's imagination and motivate them to writing;
- providing resources and equipment to facilitate writing;
- giving guidelines and establishing boundaries for writing which, while allowing flexibility, provide direction for pupils' writing;
- giving children confidence in recording their ideas in words, in a logical and sequential arrangement, considering meaning, purpose and audience;
- developing the skills necessary to enable children to think clearly, express themselves adequately, and thus to communicate more effectively;
- increasing vocabulary and encouraging experimentation with language;
- exposing children to a wide range of styles and models, upon which they can build and develop their own particular style of writing;
- giving children opportunities for creative, imaginative and personal narrative;
- providing opportunities for using writing skills in a range of contexts and in association with other modes of language and communication;
- giving regular feedback, listening to, and involving children in the assessment and evaluation of their own writing;
- encouraging children to share their writing with others, in either draft or published form;
- encouraging pupils to use illustrations and graphics, relevant and appropriate to both the type of writing and its intended audience;
- in assessing and evaluating children's writing, focussing upon strengths and weaknesses, rather than on a comparison with others;
- using descriptive evaluations rather than marks and grades.

Although all these objectives were not implemented during the observation times in the classrooms, from what was observed and from discussion with principals, teachers and pupils, it appears that these objectives do govern classroom practice and form the basis for the writing programmes.

Choice of topic

It is important to remember that, in creative writing, it is the ideas that are of utmost importance, with spelling and grammar imperfections being of secondary importance. Over-emphasis on these during the writing process disrupts the flow of ideas and causes frustration.

It is basically that I feel from the class what I think they would like to do, and if I think that this might be a good topic that they would really like to write about, or that they would sympathise with this person, or maybe from their own personal experience that they could write something, so it's basically how I feel the class relates.

Concerning choice of topics for writing, most teachers take a mid-line between the extremes of over-domination by the teacher, and total freedom for the pupils.

In two of the intermediate school classrooms, many of the ideas for writing are determined by an integrated, thematic approach to the curriculum, adopted as part of the schools' basic educational philosophy. Themes providing scope for creative and investigatory writing include: 'Disaster', 'School', 'Monsters', 'Fear and Darkness', 'Camping', 'High School Prospectus', 'Advertising', 'Da Big D Study' (early Dunedin), 'Olympics', 'Children's Books' and 'A Picture Book'. Generally, within these thematic units which are compulsory for the class, there are options for writing from which pupils can choose, and in some sections, provided they stay within the spirit of the theme, there is considerable scope for pupil input and pupil's own choice.

In the three regular intermediate classrooms writing is seen as an integral component of all learning and many of the ideas for pupils' writing come from science, social studies, and current affairs.

In the rural Form One to Seven school, topics for writing are largely dominated by the structured 'English' programme which replaces the language programme usual in primary and intermediate schools. Thus, much of the children's writing is in response to literature, and while the teacher's training and experience as a primary teacher ensure that she adapts the school scheme to the interests and needs of her pupils, having only four hours a week for all language activities limits the opportunities pupils have for free choice writing. As all areas of the curriculum are taken by the specialist teacher responsible for that subject, there is little continuity between the approach to writing taken in the 'English' class and the writing done in other classrooms.

In the multicultural classroom and the girls' classroom, more freedom is given to the pupils to select their own topics for writing. All teachers in the multicultural school hold the belief that language is the key to sharing the distinctive cultural heritages, different origins and traditions present in each classroom, so pupils are often encouraged to share their varying backgrounds through writing. The teacher in the girls' school holds strongly to her belief in the individuality of the writer, and is wary about over-direction in the selection of subjects for writing; in her view, if children are to write well, their imagination and mind must be fully engaged with the topic.

All the teachers see reading as having a major influence on pupils' ideas for writing, and on their selection of topics. Pupils are also influenced in their choice of ideas by successful stories written by their peers. In fact, for most pupils ideas do not seem to be a problem; what is often a problem is deciding which idea to extend through writing. Also, teachers are wary of over-influencing pupils' choice because of their own views of what the pupil needs to write about.

Pre-writing activities

Also important is the recognition that children do not write what they cannot say, therefore emphasis should be placed on a wide, descriptive vocabulary and stimulating the flow of ideas before commencing work. It is also useful to provide a reference list of the key words the children are likely to use. The teacher needs to provide stimulation before writing takes place.

Discussion of ideas is viewed by these teachers as the key activity for stimulating writing. Pupils talk together and explore ideas whether in whole class, small group or partner situations, before they begin to commit their ideas to paper. Moreover, if this is important for all pupils, it is seen as even more important for ESL and bilingual pupils, and for those whose language competencies are limited in any way. Pupils who come from homes where English is not the language of daily living, or where reading does not feature high on the priority list, often lack all but the most functional vocabulary, and are provided with not only lists of words and an explanation of their meaning, but opportunities to hear them spoken in the classroom as an aid to getting ideas onto paper.

For thematic and integrated studies units, as well as for topics set by the teacher or suggested by the pupils, oral activities often centre around brainstorming for ideas, vocabulary, images, similes, synonyms, phrases, openings, and endings. Generally, lists of new and unfamiliar vocabulary or examples of language usage are built up on the blackboard or overhead projector, and pupils are encouraged to add these words to their personal spelling lists. Oral games, role-play, short drama sequences, and similar activities, give further opportunities for pupils to use new words. Role-play and drama activities also help pupils develop the language skills needed to convey feelings and emotions. One teacher, however, considered that too much discussion and sharing of ideas at this stage can lead to a certain sameness about pupils' writing, and a loss of freshness and spontaneity of ideas and expression.

All the teachers also see the reading programme as important in preparing pupils for writing, and as a rich source of ideas and language. Similarly, the research and investigation associated with science, social studies and current events, contribute to the pupils' store of ideas and language, which can be of value to them later when they are writing.

Modelling

I know we should do a lot of writing with the children but I think that we have to treat that with a little bit of caution in some ways, depending upon what the activity is, because I have found that what you have written is so much better or very good, so that they will try to model themselves on you too. So I think that, if you are writing with children, you have to explain to them that you are showing them how to conference, or these are my ideas, but that there are so many acceptable and creative ways of writing that there's not one correct way, or children will begin to model on you.

[Modelling:] ... I got out of the habit of doing that because for the last two years I have had five and six children with special needs - special class children - and I used to spend a lot of time working with them, so I got out of the habit of doing it. And I actually find that by discussing the ideas with the children I help them more, and then I circulate.

None of these teachers sees modelling as being an effective response to pupils' need for guidance and support in writing. In their view, there are dangers in the practice of teachers writing in front of pupils. On the one hand, it can lead to loss of confidence in their own writing; on the other it can result in the development of conscious, imitative patterning of the pupil's writing on the teacher's, with the consequent loss of the child's individual voice.

Nonetheless, in a broader interpretation of the term, teachers do at times model certain aspects of writing, for example, how to:

- plan an article or story,
- draft a plot outline,
- etch in characters,
- write a topic sentence,
- order and sequence paragraphs,

and a range of similar, short demonstrations of how to approach the various structures associated with writing.

All the teachers make frequent use of established writers as models: reading extracts aloud to pupils, getting audience feedback as to why the passage is effective, how the writer creates atmosphere, what particular verbs carry the action, how the use of adverbs and adjectives adds vitality and colour to the writing, how the writer grabs the reader's attention and sustains interest. Often, the models chosen are selected from the children's own writing.

Sometimes, particularly when the writing is associated with a project, the models selected will be from magazines, the newspaper or advertising material, but always the criteria are the model's relevance to the topic or style of writing being explored, and its appropriateness to the pupils' writing needs.

However, all teachers see the need to model the importance of writing by respecting the pupils' need for times of sustained, silent writing and occasionally write while the children are writing. One of the constraints they experience in relation to this type of modelling is the need to use these times to give individual assistance to ESL, mainstreamed and other pupils in their classrooms who need as much individual attention as possible. For all of them, the importance of making an effective response to children with urgent teaching/learning needs far outweighs any 'exemplar' value attached to modelling.

Drafting

The draft is the base material out of which the writing develops. All but one of the teachers emphasises to the pupils that this first attempt is not a 'rough' copy; rather it is a working draft, and any additions, deletions, or alterations that are made to it in the course of writing are part of the drafting process. They also encourage pupils not to rub, or white out in their drafts, making the point that often the writer will want to come back to an original phrase, word or description; therefore, in drafting, it is important to be able to go back to the original ideas, the first things that were written.

Again, in their approach to drafting, there is considerable similarity among four of these teachers:

1. at the end of the pre-writing activities, a minute or two is spent setting the scene for the draft writing time; sometimes this may be a simple reminder of the need to maintain a quiet atmosphere for the first ten to fifteen minutes. Generally, before they settle into writing, the teacher enquires if anyone needs some urgent help; at other times, particularly when the pupils are writing in a specific genre or on a piece of writing set by the teacher, their understanding of the objectives and criteria are checked and any misunderstandings clarified;
2. during the first ten to fifteen minutes of the drafting time, the teachers try to distance themselves from the writing, and usually spend this time writing or doing some other work at their desks. However, if any pupil seems to be having problems or asks for help, the teachers move alongside them, and sometimes all that is needed is a quiet word of encouragement, or a tentative suggestion as to how the pupil might get going. With ESL, mainstreamed or other pupils who find writing particularly difficult, this is often the time when the teacher will sit down and write with the child;

3. at the end of ten to fifteen minutes, or longer if all pupils are intent on their writing and no one seems in need of help, the teachers begin to rove about the room, giving encouragement, support and affirmation, and when needed, responding to pupils' questions. After about five to ten minutes the teachers usually begin individual conferencing and the pupils start to interact with each other.

Most teachers have established a method for drafting. In general, drafting is done on loose paper, or in an exercise book or pad set aside for this purpose. While they are encouraged to draft in pencil, and to proofread and craft in pen or biro, there are no hard and fast rules about this, except that pupils are expected to adopt some method of indicating where changes have been made, either through proofreading or revision of their original draft. Three of the teachers suggest that pupils continue the practice of attempted spelling while drafting; two encourage children to keep their dictionaries and thesaurus beside them even in the drafting stage. In one of these latter rooms, pupils begin their draft with a paragraph outline: this practice, when combined with reference to both dictionary and thesaurus even while drafting, means that these pupils have a very structured approach to writing which perhaps lacks the spontaneity of some of the writing observed in the other classrooms.

In the rural Form One to Seven school, the teacher's reference to 'rough' and 'good' copy and the restrictions placed on 'process learning' through the exigencies of an imposed timetable, partly negate the value of many of the worthwhile activities in the classroom. The children are reluctant to take their writing to the teacher until they feel it is right.

Proofreading

The five teachers at this level have very similar expectations of pupils' skills in relation to proofreading. In general, except for ESL, mainstreamed and other pupils with special teaching/learning needs, children are expected to take responsibility for detecting and emending errors in punctuation, spelling and the simple conventions of style such as sentencing, paragraphing or sequencing. Where teachers identify weaknesses in pupils' proofreading skills, these children are given individual conferencing or small group teaching directed specifically to their needs.

Proofreading is considered an integral part of writing, and, except for those children with special needs, pupils expected to proofread their draft and to make any necessary corrections prior to their individual conference with the teacher. Because proofreading is part of the writing process, it is also part of the conferencing. When conferencing aspects of proofreading, teachers are aware of the need to give pupils positive feedback about the corrections and changes they may have made to their writing as a result of careful revision, use of the dictionary and thesaurus, and any peer proofreading which may have taken place. In this way, pupils begin to realise that being able to check their own work and to recognise mistakes are signs of growth in maturity as a writer.

In teaching or revising proofreading skills, teachers emphasise:

- the importance of reading the piece aloud to see if it makes sense, and to note where pauses are made and inflections placed since these are the guides for punctuation;
- the purpose of spelling and punctuation as the readers' guide to the writing;
- the value of peer proofreading and getting someone else to read the draft. Because the reader is not familiar with the ideas expressed in the writing, he reads more carefully and therefore picks up things that the writer may have missed;
- the importance of using the dictionary to check both invented spelling and other words which either the writer or the reader feels unsure about;
- the value of the thesaurus as a guide to precision in meaning, and as a source for synonyms and interesting alternatives for over-used words.

CONFERENCING TECHNIQUES

I like the children to own their work. It has to come from within them... They've got to be individuals; they've got to have their own thoughts.

Where I think I come into it ... it's when they choose me as a sounding board, or when I'm humming round and I say: 'I really like that bit there', or 'Could you say it another way?', or 'What sort of colour was it really?'

Whenever they are writing anything they're sharing their ideas, and they are sharing what they are doing with each other the whole time. ... I actually find that kids do correct each other quite a lot too. They say: 'You haven't got. ...

It is in their conferencing, whether roving or individual, that the teachers at this level contribute most effectively to their pupils' writing. The single most important quality that characterises interaction with their pupils is the respect they show to each one, both as a person and as a writer. In conferencing, emphasis is placed on careful questioning, attentive listening, and affirmative response rather than teaching and telling. The ownership of, control over, and responsibility for the writing, remains with the child at all times.

Roving conferences

The purpose of the roving conference is to give pupils visible support and positive encouragement in the drafting, crafting and publishing stages of the writing.

Four of the teachers make frequent use of the roving conference throughout the writing time: at the beginning, to give quick, 'on-the-spot' assistance to those who request it or whose behaviour indicates the need for help; in between individual conferences in order to monitor what is happening 'in process' and to reassure those who are struggling; towards the end to give quick praise, recognise effort, clarify a point, raise a query, offer a suggestion or discuss a problem.

While roving conferences are seen as useful in affirming and sustaining the writing of more able writers, they are recognised as of most value to less confident and struggling writers. These pupils often find the roving conference less intimidating than the more formal individual conference. In one room, the teacher's approach with these pupils is to kneel alongside them while they're writing and to help the child get inside the topic by asking questions such as: 'did you ever see ...?', 'have you ever been...?' Questions, comments and suggestions, are always designed to keep the ownership of the writing with the child.

In another room, at the beginning of the drafting time the teacher gives a daily, individual conference to each of the four weaker students. Sitting beside them he first asks them what they **want** to say, and then helps them to get **their** words on paper, so that the ownership of the writing remains with them.

The teacher in the multicultural class believes that the roving conference is particularly beneficial to Maori, Pacific Islands and mainstreamed pupils, who need constant reassurance, praise, encouragement and 'on-the spot' help.

In the fifth classroom, roving conferences are kept to a minimum, reserved mainly for children who are facing difficulty in getting started. While the teacher does rove from time to time, the purpose is to monitor rather than to interact.

Group conferences

Group conferencing is not a regular classroom practice of any of these teachers. At times, when several pupils are identified as having common problems, the teachers will gather them together for a short time, but in most cases, this is small group teaching rather than group conferencing.

A practice used by the teacher in the rural Form One to Seven school appears to be very successful for less competent writers: when conferencing she often takes two children together, and seated between them, writes with them. She finds this type of interaction particularly beneficial for Maori children who often find the one-on-one conference with the teacher daunting and uncomfortable.

Peer conferences

Peer conferences are considered to be an important component of the writing process by four of the teachers. They occur frequently, both formally and informally, and at all points of the process: sharing and testing ideas for writing, for audience feedback during drafting, proofreading support, sub-editing and publishing.

The method for peer-conferencing established in one classroom is typical of what happens elsewhere:

- the writer reads the draft to the peer-partner to see if it makes sense;
- the pupils discuss the ideas in the draft;
- the work is then proofread for spelling and punctuation; as the pupils become more sure of themselves as writers, they often begin to comment and offer suggestions relating to style and usage.

This same teacher often sets up peer conferences to carry out a specific task associated with one particular aspect of writing. When the conference is finished, he evaluates their peer-conferencing skills with them.

However, although all these teachers actively encourage peer-conferencing, believing that the pupils' suggestions and criticism are often more readily accepted than the teacher's, none forces children into peer conferencing against their will. As with so many aspects of the process the decision lies with the pupil who owns the writing.

In the girls' school, 'buddy conferences' are integral to what the teacher (and pupils) call 'Conference Writing', a term in this case applied to personal, imaginative and expressive writing. All drafts have to be buddy-conferenced, then revised by the pupil (who often takes considerable time over this activity), before the writing is taken to the teacher for an individual conference.

Some of the features of the buddy conference are:

1. there are always three girls in a buddy conference group, but the pupils are free to work with whoever they please, and the composition of the group often changes;

2. pupils are given clear guidelines for the conduct of the buddy conference:

- read for meaning and story-line,
- encourage and give praise,
- suggest ways of improving the writing;
- concentrate on the:

beginning: does it have oomph? is it descriptive? is it different?

plot: does it grasp the reader's interest? does it use descriptive vocabulary?

ending: is it creative? too sudden?

- read again, mark spelling and punctuation,
- write an honest comment,
- sign.

This form of peer conference seems to work very well with these pupils who take their responsibilities very seriously. Often their comments and criticism are perceptive, and they are always very positive and affirming of each other's efforts.

In the rural Form One to Seven classroom, although the pupils are given time to share and discuss ideas, and to 'swap papers', the peer conference, as it is usually understood, is not perceived by either the teacher or the pupils to be part of the writing process.

Individual conferences

The individual conference is considered by all the teachers to be the focal teaching time for writing. As well as the best way of responding to individual needs, whether ideas, style, grammar, spelling, conventions of writing, vocabulary, sentencing, paragraphing or presentation, it also provides an opportunity for talking with the pupil in a personal and private setting, and for developing a better understanding of the child as a person.

Perhaps the most important attitude shared by all these teachers is the respect they have for the writing as the intellectual property of the child, and their acceptance of the child's ultimate right to make decisions about their own writing.

Although there are other elements common to all teachers in the way in which they conduct conferences, there are sufficient differences to warrant a separate comment on each one's particular approach.

Because of her belief that the child must retain the ownership and control of the writing throughout the conference, one teacher always begins her conference with open-ended questions about the writing: 'what are you writing about?', 'where are you going?', 'where are you at?'. The pupil is given plenty of time to respond and to discuss ideas. It is only after this discussion that the teacher asks the child to read the writing. After the surface conventions have been discussed briefly with the pupil, the teacher selects one or two aspects of the writing with the rest of the time focussed on discussing these with the child. At the end of the conference, a few moments are given to discussing what the next stage in the writing will be, and the teacher enters any relevant comments in the child's running record. Depending upon the nature of the writing and the needs of the pupil, the individual conference will take anything from three to ten minutes. Generally, when time allows, the teacher likes to pre-read the draft prior to the conference, but this is not always possible with a large class.

When conferencing 'own topic' drafts, the approach of the male teacher observed at this level, is similar to the one outlined above. However, when the conference relates to writing associated with a thematic or similar unit, the teacher gives what he calls a 'pre-assessment conference'. Prior to the conference a clear guideline is provided as to what will be expected of the pupils at conference time, by establishing the questions that will be asked during the conference. These questions are always unit-specific and follow closely the objectives set at the beginning of the unit of study. For example, the questions set for the 'Olympics' unit were:

- How have you organised your book?
- What sports, athletics, ceremonies or incidents did you decide to highlight?
- What is the point of view from which you chose to observe and report?
- How do you think your pictures, newspaper cuttings, etc, illustrate your point of view?
- How does your title indicate or reflect your point of view?
- On what do you want your final presentation to be assessed?

The pupils respond well to this type of conference and the quality of the writing is very high. Each of these pre-assessment conferences takes approximately fifteen minutes.

The approach taken by the teacher in the rural Form One to Seven school is more direct:

- the writer stands alongside the teacher while she reads the work through;
- if something in the draft is unclear, she gets the child to read it to her;
- before writing any comments or corrections on the draft, the pupil identifies the problem and the teacher discusses how it can be rectified;
- surface errors are dealt with first, then possible changes, and, finally, feelings;
- notes of the conference are entered into the pupil's running record.

While regretting the somewhat structured nature of her conferences, the teacher feels that, given the many constraints upon her programme, this is the only way she can get through the conferences in the time allowed for 'English'. Each conference takes from five to eight minutes.

In the multicultural classroom also, individual conferences are considered to be the focal point of the writing programme. The procedure for conferencing is as follows:

- the teacher sits beside the pupil and reads the writing;
- any errors not picked up in individual or peer proofreading are noted and explained;
- occasionally, dependent on the pupil's stage of development as a writer, suggestions for changes are made;

- if illustrations have not been done, she discusses with the pupil what kind of illustrations would go with this story;
- if the child wishes to publish, some time is spent discussing presentation ideas;
- if the writing is not yet ready for publishing, or if the child does not want to publish, plans for the next activity are discussed;
- notes of the conference are entered into the pupil's running record.

Each conference lasts from five to eight minutes, dependent upon the needs of the child. Pupils are not forced to participate in individual conferencing; when they seem to be avoiding a personal conference, the teacher does not force the issue, but makes sure that she spends time with them during roving conference time.

In the fifth classroom, the individual conference follows the 'buddy conference' when the pupil feels that she has a 'perfect draft'. The process is as follows:

- the pupil sits beside the teacher at the teacher's desk;
- the teacher asks open-ended questions such as:
 - 'what part of your story did your friend like best?'
 - 'which part do you think needs improving?'
 - 'what do you think are the most important parts of your story?':
- the child reads aloud some parts of the story;
- the teacher goes through the writing, paragraph by paragraph, questioning the child quite closely and challenging both the ideas and the language used, but always positively and encouragingly; both strengths and weaknesses are commented upon and praise is always given for parts that work well, or for improvements noted since the last conference;

- the next stage of the writing is discussed and ideas and suggestions made for either publication or further revision;
- the teacher makes a summary of the advice given, and of the next writing task, in the pupil's running record.

Each conference takes from about fifteen to twenty minutes.

PUBLICATION

I really feel that publication is very important, and that children's self-esteem just grows so much when they are proud of a piece of work that looks good, and to foster a positive attitude towards writing has to be the most important thing you can do, especially with children of this age who, perhaps, feel that they aren't very confident. I have found that publication of work is actually one of the best ways of fostering this attitude at the start.

[Audience for pupils' writing:] Children in the class read it, other children who come into the room read it ... I display things in the corridor, on the stairwell and I've seen kids reading that. Parents read it, I read it, other teachers read it, the Principal reads it ... good articles can be published in our local *Fernleaf* ... selected piece are put in our fortnightly class letters.

[Displays of pupils' work:] I like to leave it there, normally for three to four weeks. It gives everybody that comes into the room an opportunity to look at others' work and I've never yet had anything defaced.

I read just about everything they write. ... Anything that is displayed around the room: they all read that. When I take the display down I usually put it together in a book ... we use the display boards in the corridor ... work is displayed in the foyer.

[Audience for pupils' writing:] The parents read it, they do, I do. It's a kind of community involvement thing. ... Kids love seeing their name in print.

As is apparent from the above extracts from the interview transcripts, these teachers are strongly committed to the publication of pupils' writing. Publication is seen as a way of building children's confidence, self-esteem and pride.

Audience

The above extracts emphasise that writing without an audience would be pointless. When discussing writing with their pupils, either formally with the whole class or informally, all teachers stress the importance of audience and what makes writing interesting for readers. Pupils are constantly made aware of the need to identify the audience for whom they are writing, particularly with imaginative and expressive writing, e.g., during their conferences and, by and large, pupils in all classes seem to have a good understanding of what is involved in taking account of the audience for whom they are writing.

Oral sharing

All the teachers encourage pupils to share their writing and to invite a response from their peers. However, the decision to share is always left with the children. The teacher is always ready to encourage those who are diffident and who doubt that anyone would want to read their writing, by asking their permission to read something they have written to the class.

Children share at every stage of the process:

- at the beginning, they share ideas;
- during the drafting process, they are encouraged to share both formally and informally;
- at the publishing stage, they are encouraged to comment and to give feedback to the writer.

Sharing is not confined to finished or completed writing but includes work in process, particularly these aspects:

- good phrases,
- favourite lines,
- exciting sentences,
- paragraphs that please them.

Oral sharing takes place between neighbours, in peer groups, during buddy conferences and at the general sharing session which marks the end of each day's formal writing period. Sometimes, the writer reads her own work, sometimes the reader is a friend, at other times the child may ask the teacher to read the writing. The pattern varies from class to class, and from day to day. What remains constant is the enjoyment shown by the pupils in sharing their own writing, and in listening to or reading the writing of their peers.

Publication and editing

Shaping a piece of writing for publication will involve layout, colour, illustration, neatness, editing, etc. Pupils may develop their skills to shape their writing by observing and modelling from many sources: books, magazines, comics, other children's work, displays, posters, etc. It should enable the pupil to select an appropriate form and layout for the requirements of different pieces of writing ... In shaping, consideration should be given to both its purpose and the intended audience.

The above extract from one of the school's language schemes, could well be used to describe the principles and practices that govern the publication and presentation of work in the five intermediate classrooms. For each teacher, presentation (form, layout and illustration) is an important aspect of the writing process. When children decide to publish, they are encouraged to think about the relationship between the writing and the form in which it is to be presented. Children seem very aware of the need for illustrations whether their own original work, or pictures and other forms of graphics selected from magazines, to be appropriate to the purpose, theme and message of their writing, as well as to the audience for whom it is intended.

All teachers see as their final responsibility the task of editing publication copy. However, with the more able and competent writers, surface errors such as spelling and punctuation are generally picked up either during their own proofreading, checking stage, or during peer conferencing. Thus, teachers' editing is concerned more with the clarity and logic of the writing, sequence, paragraphing and variety of sentence structure. Vocabulary and technical accuracy are stressed, not as ends in themselves, but as a means of making the writing easier and more interesting to read. At all times, teachers are very respectful of the child's voice, and of the fact that the role of editor is not to change the message of the writing, but to remove errors that could detract from that message being received by the audience.

Three of the teachers have a policy of appointing 'peer' editors, chosen from among the more competent and fluent writers; these pupils are available to the others to carry out sub-editing and to offer suggestions for presentation. One teacher has a 'checklist poster' at the front of the room, and pupils are frequently reminded to check their publication copy against these criteria:

- name your work;
- check to see that it makes sense;
- check the use of capital letters;
- remember punctuation adds meaning;
- check strange looking spelling;
- remember to use a new line for each speaker.

These same criteria are the ones used by 'sub-editors'. For some types of project work, the teacher also uses these peer editors to select the project that they consider the 'best in the class'. On these occasions, specific criteria, appropriate to the purpose of the projects, are worked out in collaboration with the class.

In the girls' class, the teacher has established an 'editing committee', whose task is to select from among the conferenced pieces of writing interesting items suitable for publication in the class magazine. One of the criteria they are given for this task is to try to ensure that every pupil is represented by at least one piece of writing.

In all the classes, the variety of formats chosen for the presentation of published work is considerable. It is clear that the pupils, on the whole, understand the need for format and illustrations to be appropriate to the style and message of the writing. Published work included booklets, big books, picture books, hand-made books, charts, posters, cartoons, projects, mobiles, class newspapers, anthologies of pupils' writing, cards, magazines, loose-leaf wall displays, three-dimensional formats, and tapes.

EVALUATION

Before the children start writing I will put on the blackboard, or, depending on the size of the task, hand them a sheet, the type of thing they will be evaluated on in this particular case. I generally key in on, perhaps four aspects of writing, and the children evaluate themselves in relation to these aspects on a one to five scale, before I do.

They generally know what I am looking for ... it's not written down, we just talk about it. ... If I think there's a lack of something - if I pick up glaring mistakes coming through from the whole class, I concentrate on that particular aspect, if I can see something that needs to be done.

I've found that parents give a lot of positive feedback to me, and I find that the children are very interested to compare what mum said, perhaps with what I am going to say, and parents are boosting the children with regards to their presentation of effort in the work that they are doing at home as well.

I try not to correct on their good copies. I don't write on their published work. If I see a glaring mistake, I'll suggest to them that they do something about it.

I do a tremendous amount of marking. I always feel that if I set work for the children, I should at least have the decency to report back to them.

Four major principles govern these teachers' evaluation of pupils' writing:

1. assessment and evaluation are seen as integral components of the learning processes, not appendages to it;
2. assessment and evaluation are always made in relation to clearly stated objectives, specific both to the needs of the individual pupil and to the particular type of writing done;

3. pupils know the purpose of the assessment and the criteria to be used in arriving at an evaluation of their writing; sometimes they are involved in determining the criteria upon which the work will be assessed;
4. when numbers or grades are used in assessing pupils' work, the meaning of these is always clearly established with the class prior to assessment.

Objectives

In general, objectives relate to:

- clarity of thought and expression;
- conventions and usage;
- order and sequence;
- presentation.

While three of the teachers assess pupils' writing both orally and in written form, two generally confine their assessment to the oral mode.

Feedback

Feedback, whether oral or written, is considered the most effective response that either teachers or children can give to writing.

Throughout the whole writing process teachers give oral feedback on all aspects of the pupils' writing. Comments are always personal to the child, and couched in specific and positive terms. Where it is used, teachers' written feedback is always preceded by oral discussion.

Oral feedback is considered extremely important for bilingual and bicultural pupils, whose growth in confidence and competence as writers is seen as dependent on constant oral discussion, and on-the-spot feedback, aimed at broadening their language experience.

Except for corrections made to spelling, punctuation and the surface conventions of writing, only two of the teachers make written comments on drafts. Such written comments often relate to a segment of the writing, either one that works particularly well or one in which the meaning does not come across. With written feedback as with oral, the comment is child-specific, focussed upon where the child is at with the writing, and calculated to elicit a positive response from the pupil. Questions, analogies, challenges, and suggestions aimed at directing the writer to further thought constitute the feedback provided.

These same two teachers often ask pupils to make a written evaluation of their own writing, using the criteria established for the task by the teacher. Pupils are also encouraged to make a written comment on the writing of their peers, saying what they particularly liked or enjoyed about a piece of writing. For this purpose, a 'comments' sheet is either fixed to the display board alongside the writing, or attached to the cover of the folder or anthology of writing.

From time to time one of these teachers also involves the parents in the feedback process by asking them to evaluate their children's writing, using the same criteria for evaluation as the teacher. Not only does this practice ensure that the parent or care giver becomes involved in the work of the child, it also creates a link between the classroom and the home.

Of the five teachers, only two consistently give written feedback for published pieces. In one class, the teacher has developed what she calls an 'awards' system. This generally takes the form of a citation which includes an assessment, on a one to three scale, of whatever objectives and criteria have been established for the piece of writing, together with a comment, for example: 'I enjoyed reading your project as you have made some sensitive and thoughtful observations. However, you need to slow down and be sure to check completed work for spelling, as accuracy is most important. Well done!'. From time to time, parents are invited to participate in the evaluation of the completed publication. In the letter she sends to them, inviting their co-operation, the teacher makes it clear to parents that she would like this to be a positive and helpful experience for the pupils.

In the other classroom where written feedback is regularly given for published pieces of work, comments are either written in pencil on the work itself - at the top or bottom or back of a page - or on a separate sheet of paper. As published work is generally the pupil's best effort, presented after an assess-

ment or evaluation conference, the feedback at this stage is usually commendatory. It is often expressed in the format in which the pupil's work has been presented: if a diary format has been used, the feedback is a 'diary entry', if letters have featured in the pupil's work, then the comments will be in the form of a letter to the writer. Because work is generally displayed after the assessment has been made, children are free to remove the comments if they wish.

Teachers' attitudes to marks and grades vary. Two of the teachers consider marks and grades to be inappropriate as a form of assessment for writing; one of these sees them as particularly irrelevant for children with special teaching or learning needs in language. The teacher in the rural Form One to Seven school is, by school policy, bound to the use of both grades and marks, but pupils are always made aware of the purpose for which they are given and they are always accompanied by a comment.

The two remaining teachers who make frequent use of written comment as a form of feedback for pupils' writing, also use marks and grades, but on a one to five, A-D scale, according to the objectives and criteria established for each piece of writing, and always reinforced by the teacher's oral and written comments.

Checklists and records

Checklists are used by all of these teachers but specific to the task in hand, and related to the objectives and content of the writing.

Some examples are:

Children's books

- Writing
- Art/layout/gimmicks
- Content/sentence structure
- Proofreading/punctuation
- Effort
- Comment

Disaster Project

- Content
- Clarity/accuracy
- Presentation
- Effort
- Comment

Class newsletter

Criteria to be used by class editors in selecting paragraphs to go into the class newsletter to parents:

- Does the writing say what actually happened/took place?
- Does the paragraph keep to the point?
- Does it make sense?
- Are the spelling and punctuation correct?
- Would parents enjoy reading it?

Olympic Project

The teacher's checklist for assessment, worked out in collaboration with pupils at the commencement of the project, contained these items:

- Is it the pupils' own work, showing evidence of their personality and point of view?
- Does it show originality in the use of vocabulary?
- Does it attend to shaping and presentation?
- In its content: does it say something about three sports, contain two stories/ anecdotes/myths connected with the Olympics, give an account of two features of the Olympic Games?

Cultural Concert Programme

Criteria to be used in selecting which group's programme will be used for parents' evening:

- Descriptive but brief item titles;
- Clear, concise, programme notes;
- Acknowledgement of supporters/teachers/helpers;
- Printing/illustrations/presentation appropriate to the programme items, and the audience of parents.

Fireworks/Fire theme story

- Clarity of intention: a story/article/poem;
- Audience catching: must be interesting;
- Realistic: it must sound true;
- Adherence to 'conference writing' (writing process) rules.

All the teachers use a system of 'running records' to monitor pupils' progress and achievement throughout the year. These records include:

1. details of conferencing: date, topic, type of writing, stage of writing, strengths, weaknesses to be worked on, and the next stage of writing;
2. summaries of assessments given for each piece of published writing.

In general, reports to parents are descriptive, noting what children can do rather than what they cannot do. In one school, the headings used are more specific and cover: range of ideas, clarity in expressing ideas, punctuation and accuracy, self-checking and self-assessment skills.

ASSISTANCE AND INTERVENTION

['Word of the day' activity:] We have a seven minute activity that we do every day as a class. We look at things like: syllables, antonyms ... and I cover a lot of formal language skills and spelling skills through that one simple activity. It is ongoing, and if I notice a particular need in children's work, for example, speech marks, then we can incorporate it.

If I find that there's a real need there, across the class or in a small group, I do acknowledge it. I think that in the end, it is important. ... I don't come in heavy on it, but I do aim at getting mastery of a lot of writing conventions and grammar that children should be able to do at this stage. I don't think sloppy work should be encouraged. I'd like to think that that's part of the drafting stage and I think all children draft. If there's a need I'll jump in.

The ones who have difficulties and really can't get it, I usually try and go over it with them individually... If I can see that there is a great gap in something that somebody is doing, I can actually go and sit down with them. Now again, if they are not ready for that particular thing, then they're not going to learn it and they're not going to know even, what I am talking about. I'll just let it go because if they are not ready for it, there's no point in doing it.

This section deals with the teachers' general attitudes towards assistance with, and intervention in, pupils' writing, as well as with the issues of spelling, punctuation, grammar, and children's voice in and ownership of their writing.

General principles

Although these teachers are aware of, and attentive to, the needs of each of their pupils, in the approach to the assistance they give to them they are non-intrusive and non-interventionist. They see their role in the classroom as facilitator, supporter and encourager of pupils' writing, and they try to maintain a careful balance between allowing pupils the freedom and scope necessary to develop their personal writing skills, and being ready to give them the assistance and help needed to write clearly and accurately.

Despite the variations in both the teachers' own personalities and the differences discernible among the children they teach, there is a marked similarity in their approaches to assistance and intervention.

Assistance is given at the various stages of writing in the following ways:

1. at the beginning of the writing period in order to motivate and stimulate the pupils' ideas for writing, through a range of activities including discussion, introduction of a theme or unit study, setting objectives and criteria for a specific unit or type of writing, language and vocabulary activities, brainstorming for ideas, vocabulary, opening sentences, and planning a piece of writing;
2. during the process of drafting: as children request help directly or as their behaviour indicates a need for assistance; this help generally takes place during roving conferences or, when a group of pupils share a common problem, through small group teaching. With ESL and mainstreamed pupils, reluctant writers, or with those whose oral traditions of language make the writing a difficult mode in which to maintain their individual voice, the assistance given is often a more intensive and individual discussion of ideas, and an initial scripting of these to get the child started on writing;
3. when the drafting is complete and has been self and peer proofread: during the individual conference, assistance is specifically targeted at each writer's individual needs which, according to the developmental stage of their writing, varies from simple spelling, punctuation, grammar and conventions, to quite sophisticated matters of form and style;
4. at the assessment and evaluation stage: the writing is discussed with the pupil in relation to how it meets the objectives and criteria set for the writing, either by the teacher if the topic is a teacher-designated one, or by the child in co-operation with the teacher, if the topic has been of the writer's own choice;
5. prior to publishing: when a pupil decides to publish a piece of writing, the assistance given relates to the fine-tuning of grammar, punctuation and conventions of writing, and issues related to format and presentation;

6. at times of sharing: often when pupils are giving feedback to their peers' writing, whether in draft or published form, the teachers take the opportunity to point out particular aspects of the writing that make it a successful or interesting piece.

Spelling

[Objectives for spelling:]

1. Spelling is taught, practised and learned mainly within the context of the writing programme.
2. Study of the structure and meaning of words will form an essential part of the classroom writing programme.
3. Mastery of a core of high frequency or heavy duty words must be a priority for all pupils.
4. Programmes will provide for planned, systematic learning, according to pupils' individual spelling needs and abilities.
5. An ongoing evaluation programme, which focusses on pupils' writing must be established.

The above extract from one school language scheme, could well be a summary of the practices observed in the five Form Two classrooms, in each of which accuracy in spelling is presented to pupils as a means of making the written message clear and meaningful to the reader. In each classroom, while spelling is considered important, the approach is always individual and targeted at each pupil's specific needs as a writer.

Practices common to all teachers include:

1. children are encouraged to use attempted spelling when drafting, as a means of keeping their ideas and narrative 'flowing' without the interruptions required for immediate spelling checks;
2. in self and peer proofreading, pupils are expected to use their dictionaries to check the spelling of unfamiliar words;

3. mistakes in spelling which have been passed over by the pupils, are noted by the teacher during either roving or individual conferencing, and pupils add these words to their personal spelling lists. Each pupil's personal spelling list is checked from time to time, to monitor mastery of the words most frequently misspelt by the pupil;
4. occasionally teachers take a few minutes to teach the spelling of words commonly misspelt by the class or a small group;
5. the spelling of new vocabulary used in brainstorming, and in presenting ideas and language for a theme or unit, is always written on the black-board and any irregularities in spelling pointed out. These words are expected to be added to each pupil's personal list;
6. published work is expected to have accurate spelling; any mistakes which remain after sub-editing has been completed, are corrected by the teacher before the writing is finally published.

Punctuation

All these teachers put considerable emphasis on punctuation as a means by which the message, story or point of view expressed in writing is made clear to the reader. As with spelling, punctuation is taught or revised, as each individual's specific needs are revealed to the teacher through the writer's drafting and proofreading.

Practices observed in the classrooms include:

1. errors in punctuation are expected to be picked up and corrected in the self and peer proofreading stage of writing;
2. omissions or mistakes in punctuation which have not been noted at the proofreading stage, are discussed with the writer during roving or individual conferences, and where necessary, individual teaching based on the pupil's writing needs and stage of development is given;
3. where specific errors in punctuation occur across the class, short spells of whole class teaching are targeted at these skills; at other times, if the errors are confined to a small group of pupils, then these children will be given a short spell of group teaching;

4. pupils are encouraged to read their writing aloud, so that their spoken punctuation may serve as a guide to their written punctuation;
5. published writing is expected to be punctuated correctly, and teachers see the final responsibility for this to belong to them as editors.

Grammar

The general policy in regard to grammar is similar to those adopted for spelling and punctuation. Grammar is considered important, but best explored through the children's own writing and reading. The approach is related to the individual's need. In dealing with Maori and Pacific Islands pupils, cultural sensitivity when pointing out certain aspects of grammar is emphasised.

Voice and ownership

Rather than encroaching upon ownership and shaping too much, you really have to give an outline... I've got to be very standoffish until they get going.

I like the children to own their work. It has to come from within them, otherwise it would be all me, it's not that way. They've got to be individual; they've got to have their own thoughts.

Among the many qualities that make these teachers so effective in their response to pupils' writing, two merit special mention: awareness of, and belief in, the importance of the child's voice in writing, and respect for children's ownership of their writing including the right to make decisions about it. All these teachers see their role as releasing and giving scope to the child's expression of personal ideas, views, and feelings.

According to the five intermediate teachers observed, pupils need to feel involved in, and committed to, what they are writing for their voice to come through. Unless this is so, their writing will often be derivative and imitative. Hence, all these teachers see dangers in over-modelling, too much teacher motivation and stimulation, and too much assistance and intervention; instead they allow the pupils freedom to reflect upon their own experiences, to explore their own ideas, feelings and opinions, and to experiment with language, different genres and styles. Also, these teachers avoid imposing structures, conventions, and forms of writing upon pupils whose basic mode of communication is oral

in order to encourage the emergence of their cultural voice in their writing. Finally, all these teachers stress the importance of pupils having trust and confidence in their teacher in order to write confidently about what they really feel.

In conferencing pupils, the teachers do not take over the writing. Rather, they act as commentators, reflectors, clarifiers, and questioners. Decisions to change the writing, or to explore further, remain with the pupil. Similarly, decisions about sharing pieces, either in draft or published form, belong to the child, and while the teachers encourage and support the less confident, they do not share or publish for the writer without that pupil's permission.

CHAPTER SEVEN: WRITING AT FORM FOUR

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF AND APPROACHES TOWARDS WRITING

As much as possible I like writing to be integrated into a total programme and I like writing to develop from something where it can. I think that every unit of work that I would cover would have some form of writing in it, whether it be formal, creative, whatever. But writing for its own sake also. I do do writing on its own.

We have one period a week and that is fixed, so that is 25 per cent. But a lot of their work deals with writing ... we are always writing.

We have writing as a part of most activities. We also like to vary [expository style] as much as possible. We also concentrate on techniques of writing ... although in a slightly more hidden way at junior level. So the writing part of our course is a fairly large part, even though writing may be interspersed with other modes.

As I see writing, it actually has a high place in the teaching of English. I really see kids' ability to write as being their entry into occupations, into the more advanced power positions. If they ever want to do anything they are going to have to be able to write accurately.

I don't see writing in isolation from any of the other modes that we actually do in the classroom. I always feel that oracy comes first, and so in any writing activity there is always a lot of other stimulus: oral sharing, discussion ... Oracy comes first and literacy comes second and they're obviously very closely linked.

If these extracts, taken from the transcripts of their interviews, indicate that these teachers value writing highly, it is also evident that the secondary school system's subject-based approach to curriculum changes how writing is perceived. In the primary and intermediate schools writing is seen both as a creative art and as a tool for learning, having a place in the curriculum

in its own right. In the secondary school, however, writing is subsumed under the umbrella of English. While its importance, along with oracy, is not denied, it vies for time with the other modes of language and, in most cases, apart from the occasional unit of time devoted to 'creative' or expressive writing, it becomes one of the modes through which students respond to literature, reveal their knowledge of language, develop an argument, record research, or debate an issue. This more functional approach to the teaching of writing means that emphasis on writing as a means of self-expression and self-exploration, of sharing personal experiences, beliefs, feelings and opinions, is lessened, and that students' attitudes towards writing change. Students' attitudes seem to become more market-orientated, i.e., more concerned with the product and how it will be evaluated, than with the process and how it will enable them to craft a piece of writing which they have enjoyed creating and sharing with others.

Of the five teachers observed in fourth form classrooms, four are women. The schools are reasonably representative of the range of secondary schools in New Zealand despite the small sample. Two are urban co-educational schools, one of which has been part of the scheme for the internal assessment of School Certificate English since its inception in 1976; in one of the two inner-city girls' schools, nearly seventy per cent of the students are non-pakeha; the remaining school is an urban boys' school which has been involved in the internal assessment of School Certificate English since 1977. In all five schools, the quality of the English teaching is high and the teachers are concerned for, and committed to, the development of language competency and confidence among their students.

In all the classrooms, opportunities are given to students to write:

- to discover and generate ideas;
- for oneself;
- to analyse and synthesise ideas;
- to convey personal experiences;
- to present facts and events.

Other reasons for writing include: to provide an aesthetic experience, to correspond with others, and to take notes.

While, in general, all agree with the concept of writing as a process rather than as a product, in practice their adoption of a process approach to all types of writing is limited by what they see as the constraints of:

1. time: four classes have four hours a week for English, one has three, out of which one is taken for drama;
2. literature: in all classes the emphasis on literature as the basis of their English curriculum is very marked;
3. the other modes: speaking, listening, reading, moving, shaping, watching, viewing which all have to find a place within these four hours;
4. language usage and skills teaching: these areas are often seen as having a place in the programme quite independent of their function in writing;
5. assessment and evaluation: the need to produce a mark, a grade or a ranking, exerts a dominant influence over the way teachers evaluate students' writing;
6. the standards required for School Certificate: even in the schools where this is internally assessed the need to teach to the objectives and standards of the national examination begins to outweigh the need to match objectives to each student's individual abilities and teaching or learning needs.

However, in the periods or units of work specifically designated as a time for writing, these teachers do adopt an approach which gives greater emphasis to the process than to the product. Features of the process which are seen by all teachers as being essential to what is variously labelled creative writing, personal writing, writing process or expressive writing, include:

- pre-writing activities;
- drafting or sustained silent writing;;

- proofreading;
- conferencing;
- sharing;
- publishing.

Of the five, only two model the act of writing although another does model brainstorming and the planning and sequencing of writing. Students' freedom to choose the topic on which they write is accepted by all the teachers as an ideal, but except for the teacher who regularly sets aside one period a week for free choice writing, they believe that the diverse demands of the English curriculum do not always allow them this opportunity.

Nonetheless, these teachers do see the process approach to writing as having considerable strengths. It:

1. puts the focus in writing firmly upon the writer and gives the individual student the responsibility for, and ownership of, the writing;
2. develops the skills associated with writing in a realistic and meaningful way;
3. affirms and supports the student through reinforcing self-concepts relating to identity, worth and individuality;
4. allows the teachers to interact with their students, e.g., through conferencing, and to teach them within the context of their own writing and according to their cultural identity, interests, abilities and needs;
5. emphasises the importance of purpose, audience and register in writing;
6. reinforces, through the sharing and publication of writing, the link between writing and reading;
7. enables the writer, through sharing writing with others, to 'face the audience' and to understand the qualities in writing that elicit a positive response from an audience.

Some of the concerns about the writing process, as expressed by these teachers, include:

1. the possibility of students lacking motivation and support to experiment with a range of writing styles and forms;
2. the danger that, because grading and marking are regarded as inappropriate to writing, many teachers will give their students insufficient feedback on their writing;
3. the question of 'voice', particularly as it relates to bicultural and bilingual children in translating oral responses into authentic writing, while at the same time teaching the skills required to write clearly and accurately, and in the forms necessary for 'occupational' writing;
4. the dilemma of over-intrusiveness on the one hand, and of insufficient teaching on the other;
5. the problem of what one teacher terms 'alienated awareness', i.e., the gap between the students' actual writing and what is perceived by them as successful writing;
6. the imposition of marking, grading and examinations on writing and their effect on the process;
7. the time required for drafting, proofreading, conferencing, redrafting, editing, publishing within the constraints imposed upon the process by the secondary system of education.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

In each of the schools where these teachers work classrooms are allocated on a subject specialist basis. Hence, within the parameters available in terms of space and furniture, the organisation of the environment is very much the responsibility of the teacher.

Of the five classrooms, four were large and airy with good light and plenty of display space. The furniture, too, was very suitable for group work, being a mixture of tables and desks which could be easily re-arranged to suit either individual or group activities. The fifth room, a basement once used for music, was, physically, a less desirable environment; however, its inadequacies were compensated for by the teacher's ingenuity in organisation.

The display of students' work was a feature of all the rooms and reflected both the nature of the subject and the teachers' awareness of the importance of students' own work as a source of ideas for others, and as a stimulus for future activities. While most of the work displayed was presented on flat surfaces, other formats were sometimes used, particularly at the junior levels. Displays were well 'sign-posted', both as to topic and class level.

In all rooms, blackboard space was adequate and well placed, and rooms were well resourced with overhead projectors, tape-recorders and listening posts. Cupboard space and book-shelves were well-stocked with resources for learning, and the fabric of the rooms was well maintained.

The student composition of each class reflected the philosophy of each particular school. In all but one school, broadbanding is practised and, of the four classes in this category, three were middle band students, that is of average ability, while the fourth was made up of top band students, all of whom were taking one language other than English, with some taking two languages. In the fifth school, classes are genuinely unstreamed to ensure that each is representative of the school's intake in relation to cultural background, gender

and ability. Because of the implications it has for teaching writing, another factor to be considered was that in the five classes observed at this level, non-pakeha students were present in each. Of the two co-educational classes, one had 30 students, of whom three were Maori, one a Samoan, and two South-East Asian; in the other, of the 26 students, five were Maori, one was Samoan and two were Asian. In the boys' class, of the 29 students, five were Maori, three were of Pacific Islands' origin and two were South East Asian. Of the 26 girls in one of the girls' classes, three were Maori, one was a Samoan and two were South-East Asian, while in the second girls' class of 26, 12 were Pacific Islands' students - predominantly of Samoan descent, five were Maori, two were South-East Asian and seven were pakeha. Thus, in all classrooms, the teachers are very conscious of the need to recognise, not just gender and ability differences, but also those of culture.

In all classrooms the students sit where they like, and while in the two co-educational classrooms, the teachers try to encourage non-gender choices, they do not force the issue, preferring to use more subtle tactics such as teacher-designated, gender-mixed groups for the wide range of co-operative activities which take place. In the multi-cultural girls' class, the teacher makes no attempt to fuse the cultural groups artificially, since she believes that, in language and writing activities particularly, they feel more comfortable when working with those who share common interests and whose needs in language are similar. In none of the classes is there any regular organisation of writing level groups.

Student-teacher relationships were excellent in all classes. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students, both as individuals and as a group, their ability to pitch their teaching to a level appropriate to all the students, their recognition of students' interests and their firm but relaxed manner with the students, ensured that the atmosphere in each room was warm, friendly and conducive to learning.

The students' respect for their teachers is reflected in this sampling of some of the comments made by those who were interviewed:

- 'she doesn't let you waste your time';
- 'she doesn't make you feel silly';
- 'she really seems to like reading what I write';

- 'she always has a go herself and doesn't get snooty when we say what we think about it';
- 'she's not like other teachers, she doesn't pretend that everything is easy;
- 'she doesn't put horrible remarks all over your work';
- 'she respects us and treats us like people';
- 'she likes us and doesn't treat us as if we are dumb';
- 'she understands Maori kids and Samoans';
- 'she makes us feel at home and lets us help each other';
- 'he's friendly and tuned in to what works with kids';
- 'he discusses things with us and lets us say what we think';
- 'he makes classes interesting and really teaches us'.

Most felt that as a result of the teaching they had received their writing improved.

In four of the classrooms the students worked well together and seemed to enjoy the opportunities given to work in groups and to share each other's writing. In one class, relationships were rather 'fizzy' and boys and girls seemed to have difficulty working together in the groups to which they were assigned for a group writing activity. However, in the way the teacher dealt with this situation, he showed his ability to diffuse tense situations, and to be both firm and just in dealing with the boy who was the principal disruptive influence in the class.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Through writing to enable students to:

- experience pride in their own creative achievements;
- draw on their own personal experience and value it as a basis for writing;
- value the process as much as the final product, i.e., revise, edit, confer about writing before presenting a final copy.

Teachers need to:

- emphasise the importance of accuracy and presentation in final copy;
- lead in to writing tasks;
- realise the personal nature of writing and that in the early stages it needs to be worked on independently in a peaceful atmosphere;
- focus writing tasks and make them relevant;
- provide positive feedback and display writing;
- respect students' ownership of their writing.

Writing is highly personal and individual and its development depends on the environment the teacher creates. Writing is a highly idiosyncratic process that varies from day to day. Variance is the norm, not the exception.

Third and Fourth Form English: There should be a strong and constant emphasis throughout the year on writing. The draft/process approach can be fostered as a unit in itself and as an integral part of unit work.

Creative expression arising out of myths and legends, imaginative story-telling, drama, dance, song, should be encouraged. Through writing the students are given the opportunities to produce [this] knowledge, actively, and to express their own thoughts, emotions, ideas and arguments.

Taken together, these extracts from the English schemes of three of the schools summarise the practices observed in the classrooms during the periods of observation. Teachers, on the whole, are teaching writing from a process orientated rather than a product driven approach, and although the structure of the curriculum and the organisation of the timetable do not always suit the needs of either the subject or the students, within the limits of these constraints, all five teachers respond effectively in a range of ways to their pupils' writing.

Objectives

As well as setting clear and specific objectives for each teacher-designated topic and unit of work, and negotiating objectives with individual students when the writing topic is of their own personal choice, all teachers have overall objectives for their year's programme as it relates to writing, whether this be personal narrative, creative or expressive writing, factual or informational writing, or critical or expository writing.

These include:

- enabling students to experience pride in their own creative achievements;
- drawing on students' personal experience as a basis for their writing;
- leading students to value the process of writing as much as the final product;
- focusing writing tasks and making them relevant;
- giving students the tools to proofread, assess and improve their own writing;

- practising skills of sentence and paragraph construction;
- teaching the grammar needed for students to write effectively;
- increasing the students' awareness of the purposes for which language is used;
- teaching students to use language as a tool for specific purposes;
- increasing the amount of written work done in personal, descriptive, narrative, imaginative, and factual styles;
- providing positive feedback;
- publishing and displaying writing;
- respecting students' ownership of their writing.

Choice of topic

I like writing to develop from something where it can, and I think that every unit of work that I would cover would have some form of original writing in it, whether it be formal, creative, whatever. ... I think Witi Ihimaera is a writer who is wonderful for Maori and Pacific Islands students, because there is something in there that they can relate to, so perhaps the best writing comes out of people's personal experience.

[Journals:] Some mornings they come in and they're all stuck, so we do a drama game or something as stimulation. I might have something in the room, like a picture or something.

[Ideas come from] the students themselves, from topical events, from something I've discussed with another teacher ... I'm prepared to use anything that captures the imagination of the students. If they've got a lot of energy and enthusiasm for something I can capitalise on it ... to me, the verbalisation of the ideas is part and parcel of the writing process.

At the fourth form level, as exemplified by these teachers, a great deal of the writing occurs in response to literature. All the teachers use a range of devices to enable students to get inside the novels and plays, and to write in a range of registers and for a variety of audiences. For example:

- writing an autobiographical journal or diary from the perspective of one of the characters;
- writing a 'curriculum vitae' for one of the characters;
- writing a transcript or summary of an interview with a character;
- writing a newspaper report, letter to the editor, editorial or feature article, relating to some happening in the novel;
- writing the transcript or account of the 'trial' of a character;
- writing the first chapter of the novel's sequel or writing a biography of a character's life after the close of the novel or play.

Generally, in units of work based on a novel or play, or a theme in literature, or an aspect of language, there is a range of topics and ideas from which the students can select. In organising units of work, teachers are very responsive to the interests of students and aware of the need to provide for the gender and cultural differences among them, as well as for the varying abilities that they possess as writers. However, the teachers are also flexible, and if a particular student wishes to approach the writing from an angle not included among the teacher's suggestions, that idea is discussed and together, the teacher and student will set objectives and criteria for the student's preferred approach.

In the predominantly Maori and Pacific Islands classroom, when dealing with writing associated with literature, the teacher always selects the topic, in that she sets the novel and the assignment but, again, within the assignment there are choices in a variety of registers. She believes that Maori and Pacific Islands students need quite strong direction and guidance in the choice of subjects and topics, but also that if the ideas and suggestions relate to cultural ideas and issues, and if the students are given opportunities to talk about and to share their ideas, then they are more motivated and, as a consequence, write with more confidence.

In non-literature-based writing, any thematic project or unit of work is always very thoroughly discussed with the students; their reactions and responses are considered very carefully and, quite frequently, their suggestions are built into the assignment.

From time to time, in all classes, opportunities are given to students to select their own topics for writing. However, many of the students find this difficult and seem to write more willingly and competently when given more direction from the teacher.

Pre-writing activities

Pre-writing tasks are considered an integral part of the writing process and all the teachers give this aspect of the writing a high priority. Every writing task, whether literature based or the more personalised types of writing, is prepared for by pre-writing activities which include:

- discussion: whole class, group or partner;
- brainstorming: for ideas, vocabulary, similes, synonyms, imagery, phrases, good openers, mood words, etc;
- teacher-directed memory writing: to recall an experience, a mood, a favourite place, or emotions such as fear, excitement or sadness;
- debates or panel discussion: particularly to build up ideas for expository writing;
- drama and role-play activities: to help students actualise such things as conflict, anger, confrontation and authority;
- oral story-telling or reading aloud: to stimulate the imagination and get ideas moving;
- video-clips, and other types of visual stimulus: to emphasise the relationship between visual, verbal and non-verbal language;
- sharing of students' own writing: to reinforce pride in their own writing, to demonstrate the link between reading and writing, and the importance of audience response and reaction to writing.

Many more examples could be given of the ways in which these teachers 'warm up' their students for writing; those listed above are some of the pre-writing activities which took place during the observation times.

Among the many reasons given to support their belief in the importance of pre-writing activities, the following are probably the most significant:

- pre-writing activities are aimed at giving the students the ideas, skills, structures and vocabulary necessary for written language;
- oral language activities are a prerequisite for writing;
- planning, structuring and organising skills are very helpful to students in assisting them to manage their writing;
- the use of 'hot topics' makes pre-writing, and therefore drafting, much easier for students because they already have some knowledge, their opinions and prejudices and the vocabulary required, and are therefore not working 'blind' or 'cold';
- pre-writing preparation provides students with security and confidence because it gives them the tools for writing: ideas, information, form and vocabulary;
- careful organisation of pre-writing activities provides a structure for writing that enables students to respond to the teacher's ideas;
- the strong link between thought, talk and writing, necessitates opportunities for student interaction throughout the process;
- teaching expository or formal writing through 'level transposition', i.e., allowing students to write an idea in a casual style and then helping them to raise it to a more formal level, is a useful pre-writing activity for Maori and Pacific Islands students;
- directed 'memory writing' gives students the structures which enable them to identify and order their feelings, impressions and moods, and provides a framework for their writing; it is a very helpful activity for Maori and Pacific Islands students who often have difficulty in expressing their feelings in writing of a personal nature;

- because writing is an individual and personal activity, 'one-to-one' pre-writing activities are often more beneficial to students, since what works for one may be an obstacle of others;
- for Maori and Pacific Islands students it is important to get alongside them personally, to help get them started; it is also considered important for these students to do lots of talking: with the teacher, with a neighbour, a group of friends or the whole class, particularly before writing but also during the process.

Only in one of the classrooms (i.e., the boys' school) does the teacher regularly use journal writing as a pre-writing activity, not only on the one day a week set aside specifically for writing, but at the beginning of each session with the class. While she sees journals as basic to her writing programme, she also recognises that journal writing needs preparation, discussion and motivation, and so she discusses their journals with the students and makes them look at their previous entries, read them, and think and feel through something before writing the journal for that day. She herself keeps a journal and, whenever possible, will write her journal at the same time as the students. Generally, between 10 to 15 minutes are given to journal writing at the beginning of each English period.

In the emphasis they place upon pre-writing activities, and in the time they give to their preparation, as well as the time allowed in class for their exploration, these teachers respond very effectively to their exploration, these teachers respond very effectively to their students' need for motivation and stimulation.

Modelling

[Models:] ... providing that it's the right model it can set them off on something ... again with Witi Ihimaera: I spent a year teaching in England ... I used to have West Indian kids there, and I got some fabulous writing from them because there was something in what he was writing about that they could relate to and understand ... writing models that have things that form connections are good.

I think modelling is vital. I think that's the key to it.

[Writing:] ... the first thing is that I might be writing myself, and if I am modelling writing the students can see that and are pretty sensitive to the fact that I may not want to be disturbed. Now I don't write every time; that may not be appropriate if there are students who are unsettled, or if there are students who need some help.

Teaching with low ability classes, I tried [modelling], and I didn't think it was very good; well, they were ESL and low ability kids, as it happened, and I just automatically went on to a higher level, and I didn't think it was going to help them very much. It was better to get an example of writing closer to their own level, but, of course, with the seniors, it's just fine.

I have not kept a journal with a class. ... but I have done model writing as far as short-story process goes... I have displayed to kids examples of my writing ... So they have seen the product of some of my writing, but admittedly, not the process of doing it in front of them.

As is evident from these extracts from the transcripts of their interviews, these teachers have very different perceptions of the value of modelling.

Of the two who practice modelling, both model in two ways: by sitting at their desk, or, in one case, at the back of the room, and writing while the students write; by writing on the blackboard or overhead projector, in a way in which the processes of planning, ordering, changing a word, or altering the position of a sentence, are clearly visible to the students. Both believe that seeing the teacher write, knowing that she finds it difficult, sharing her efforts and conferencing with her, takes the mystery out of writing for the students. Both of these teachers also make frequent use of students' writing as a 'model' for others, but always with the permission of the writer. They also use extracts, or short pieces from published authors, but find that, at the fourth form level in particular, the children get more inspiration and help from models written by their peers.

The other three, although they may not write with their students, do believe in presenting them with 'models' for writing. For this they generally use a mixture of the students' writing, though always with the consent of the writer, and pieces from published writers. In the case of the multicultural classroom, particular attention is paid to using 'models' to which the students will respond easily, and which are culturally appropriate to the students.

All the teachers have had practising professional writers in their classroom to talk about writing, and the students have been most enlightened by these experiences, especially when they come to realise that even published writers who get paid for writing, find the task of writing difficult, that they draft and redraft, proofread, discuss their writing with an editor, and at times have to accept that an idea won't work, or that, today, the words won't come.

Drafting

Ideally, when they are actually writing, I think that they should be left on their own and I think there should be silence. I try to say to them: 'there's no point discussing this with anyone else at this stage, because it's your idea, no-one else can help you, this is yours, it belongs to you and this isn't the right time to share it'. I think, during the actual writing stage, silence is important and I tend to withdraw myself ... But, on the other hand, if someone was looking stuck, I would go over and maybe, give them a little injection of something to get them started.

Writing is a craft, and as such requires practice. Writing requires rehearsal... The process of writing rather than the need to complete the product becomes the emphasis. Pupils show us what they see in their writing when they change something. That is what revision is all about - seeing again.

Once they're writing I tend to regard that as a fairly private experience because I know that I like to be left alone at that point... the way I monitor it is by looking, observing how much activity is going on... this particular fourth form... are fairly independent and there are very few who can't get involved in their writing, so they don't actually want to be interrupted.

In the three classrooms represented by these quotations, the teachers' practice is exactly as described. Only very occasionally did any of the three find it necessary to get alongside any student at the drafting stage. When this did occur it was usually to assist an ESL or mainstreamed student; on one day, in the co-educational class of brighter students, when writing was taking place during the last period, the teacher had to spend time with two or three students who were finding it hard to settle down, but apart from that, in all three classrooms the students' absorption in what they were doing was quite remarkable. It was only towards the end of 30 minutes or so, when they began to proofread and revise their writing, that quiet discussion began.

In the multicultural room, drafting is taken seriously, but here, only rarely does the teacher demand or expect silence. She believes that too intense a silence is culturally oppressive for these students who feel most at ease when they can chat to each other, share an idea, or check an impression. While the students are drafting, the teacher works alongside them and helps them in a non-intrusive, non-threatening way to get their ideas on paper. As she sees it, this is the problem area for Maori and Pacific Islands children. They can talk about something orally, but their cultural preference for oral communication seems to make it more difficult for them to get their ideas into words on paper.

In the unstreamed, co-educational class, drafting is not a difficulty for the more able students who settle down to drafting very quickly, and write with considerable concentration. However, with the less fluent and more reluctant writers, the majority of whom, in this class, were boys, the teacher's motto is to prevent, rather than to cure, blockages, and so he moves quickly to assist those who seem to be having difficulties with getting their ideas down on paper. During the time when the teacher was observed, the students were engaged in a group writing activity, and when the students were actually engaged in writing the teacher spent most of his time moving from group to group checking how each one was progressing and giving help where needed.

Proofreading

Proofreading their own work, as well as peer proofreading, is a skill which all the teachers interviewed and observed consider to be an integral component of the writing process.

In three of the classes (the boys' school, the predominantly pakeha girls' school and the brighter co-educational class), although students have relatively few problems with spelling and punctuation, proofreading is still taken very seriously. During the first reading of their draft, most use some sort of system - highlighter, brite liner, or coloured biro - to indicate parts they feel need attention or with which they are not happy.

Where they do have difficulties with spelling, students are, on the whole, very conscientious in checking possible errors by using their dictionaries. For these students, the post-drafting phase of writing has developed from simple proofreading to check spelling and punctuation, to redrafting and textual revision. For this, the thesaurus is often more in evidence than the dictionary. Both by themselves and with their peers, students rework their drafts, looking at vocabulary to see how it could be made more precise, interesting, or graphic; assessing the appropriateness of register to the writing's purpose and audience; considering beginnings and conclusions, to ensure that the piece is well-rounded and hangs together smoothly.

In one of these classrooms, the teacher always gives the students a guideline or checklist for proofreading, or as she sees it, at this stage of their development as writers, crafting. The function of the checklist, which varies according to the type of writing undertaken, is to focus the students' attention on target areas within the writing. For example:

- underline things you want to keep or things you like;

- circle things with which you are not happy or want to change;
- have you conveyed your mood and used your senses?
- is there dialogue and is it set out and punctuated correctly?
- are there any weak words which you could do without?
- look at the beginning and at the end: do they grab the reader?

In the mixed ability co-educational class, getting students to accept that careful proofreading, using a dictionary to check spelling and consulting the thesaurus, are pre-requisites for conferencing, is a continual hassle for the teacher. Most of the students have the skills but some seem insufficiently motivated to put the effort required into proofreading their work, and only do so when the teacher's persistence is unremitting. Faced with this type of response from students, the teacher sometimes finds it difficult to maintain his role of friend, counsellor, and supporter.

Proofreading is an aspect of writing that Maori and Pacific Islands students also find difficult. They are inclined to become dispirited and to feel ashamed when they discover mistakes, and have a tendency to hide their paper, to tear it up and to begin again. For these students, it is very important for the teacher to interact with them at this stage of the writing, and to respond to their need for encouragement and support by working through their drafts on a one-to-one basis, or with a group who come together spontaneously. A considerable amount of the teacher's in-class time is spent on this type of assistance, which she finds more effective than forcing the individual student to go through the process, initially, unaided by the teacher.

CONFERENCING TECHNIQUES

Conference Questioning

- a. Opening questions: ask only the three following questions:
 1. how is it going?
 2. what are you writing about now?
 3. where are you now in your draft?
- b. Following questions: lead to more basic control of the piece, e.g.: so you lost the turtle in the car?
- c. Process questions: help pupils to stay orientated in their writing, e.g.: where had you thought to start?
- d. Questions that reveal development, e.g.: what do you think of this piece of writing?
- e. Questions that deal with basic structure, e.g.: what do you think this piece is about?
- f. Questions that cause a temporary loss of control, e.g.: what does your ending have to do with your beginning?

While all teachers recognise the importance of conferencing, and value the opportunities it gives to them to get alongside their students and to interact more intimately and intensively with them concerning their writing, all feel that, given the constraints of time, the number of students in each class, the fact that they may teach up to five English classes, and the many other aspects of English which have to be covered in the course of the year, regular individual conferencing of students is an ideal difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, in spite of these reservations, some very effective conferencing was observed, and the students themselves acknowledge the conference with the teacher as the most helpful support to their development as writers.

Roving conferences

Roving conferences monitor work in process; they are short, non-intrusive and targeted at motivating, stimulating, encouraging, and where needed, assisting students having difficulties. In the roving conferences teachers concentrate on giving positive reinforcement, helping reluctant or diffident writers start their draft, making tentative suggestions in response to students' queries, and asking questions to clarify meaning as expressed in the draft. At the draft or early stage writing, teachers in the four predominantly pakeha classes try to leave students undisturbed for a period of time and only give roving conferences to those students whose need of help is such that, without it, they will become resistant to writing.

In the largely multicultural classroom, the roving conference is the principal form of conferencing used by the teacher. She sees it as being a more culturally appropriate approach, and therefore a more effective response for these students, than the longer, more personalised approach associated with individual conferencing techniques. Maori and Pacific Islands students often become reticent when isolated from their peers, or working in silence which can seem oppressive. Moreover, they seem to gain confidence from hearing what is said to others, and from being free to join in another's conference. Where they can hear what the teacher says to their neighbour or their friend at another table, and feel welcome to join in, to become involved in another's learning, then they begin to participate more actively in their own learning. For her part, the teacher views the interaction of others in the roving conferences very positively. It often results in better understanding for the writer, since her peers often see the problem more readily than she herself, and are able to clarify it for her, in a way that does not make her feel 'got at' by the teacher.

Comments made by the teacher during roving conferences are positive and affirmative, aimed at giving the writer confidence by identifying good words, phrases and images, and at making suggestions for improvement. For example: 'This is coming along very nicely'; 'I think I know what you are going to write about'; 'Who is the person? Go back into your picture and think'; 'Nice: is she on a carpet or on the ground?'; 'If you took that out and cut it at "soft", it would be sharper'.

Group conferences

As a general practice among these teachers, group conferences take place only when the writing itself has been a group activity, as happens when students undertake a co-operative writing unit.

Sometimes, having conferenced several children, or marked a writing assignment when the teacher perceives a common need among a group of students, they will be taken together for some additional help; however, the nature of this assistance is more akin to group teaching than to conferencing, since the direction for learning comes more from the teacher than from the students.

At other times, particularly when they have been working on a common theme, students will conference each other's writing in a more general sense, for example, to select the piece which they think is best, most exciting or more nearly fits the criteria given for the writing activity. At the end of one such activity, after some preliminary discussion the students were asked to write up, individually, a familiar fairy tale in contemporary idiom; the group task was to evaluate which of the five pieces of writing was the most effective. Students gave a verbal assessment of each of the pieces, and some of their comments were very direct: 'imaginative but sick', 'massive ending', 'interesting beginning but unconvincing end', 'story-line well linked but unimaginative', 'story-line was easy to follow'.

In the mixed ability co-educational class, the teacher makes quite frequent use of co-operative writing, and students respond well to the approach he has adopted for conferencing such work. Before concentrating on any group, he moves about the room, listening attentively to the drift of the discussion. At this stage of the process, if things are going well, he makes some commendatory comment and moves on; if there is some problem, or if the group has not jelled, he sits down and together, he and the students will sort things out. The following is a brief description of one such group conference:

1. the teacher sat alongside the group and asked for a verbal outline of the story;
2. he then went through the written outline, paying particular attention to the story-line of each of the five sections, giving feedback, asking for clarification, and making suggestions in response to students' questions;

3. the next step was to identify who was to be responsible for writing each of the sections; when this was done some time was spent discussing issues relating to continuity of story-line and consistency in style;
4. finally, he discussed with the group what might be the most effective way of utilising the skills of the sixth member of the group; after several suggestions had been rejected by the students, and they spent some time discussing how this would be linked to the story-line and characterisation, as they had been developed for the story proper.

What was significant in the session outlined above was the way in which the teacher skilfully showed the students how to explore their own ideas, how to organise and sequence them, and how to signify character through the use of well-chosen verbs, adverbs and adjectives.

Peer conferences

Peer conferencing, whether in pairs or small groups, is encouraged by all teachers and widely practised in all the classrooms. While they can and do take place at all stages of the process, peer conferences most frequently occur when students have completed drafting, or when they are preparing a piece for publication. Generally, the first task undertaken in the peer conference is that of proofreading. However, at this stage of their development as writers, students are more able to offer each other positive and constructive criticism, and to make suggestions as to how the writing could be made clearer or more interesting to the reader.

Individual conferences

While the individual conference is valued as an ideal approach to teaching writing, only in two of the classrooms is it a regular feature of the teaching and learning programme.

In the case of the two co-educational classes where writing as a process is taken in unit modules, longer individual conferences, as opposed to the shorter roving conferences already described, are given, at most, three times a term, and in the multicultural classroom, such conferences are seen as inappropriate to the cultural background and social customs of the students.

The two teachers who make most effective use of individual conferencing are those who teach in the predominantly pakeha boys' and girls' schools. For both of these teachers, the emphasis in the individual conference is on 'crafting' the draft which, by the time they meet with the student, has already been proofread, redrafted and self-assessed by the writer. In both classes, conferences are voluntary. If students do not wish to be conferenced prior to assessment, the choice is theirs. But while most students do discuss their writing with the teacher, a few of the more confident and competent writers prefer to hand in their writing without having had it conferenced; however, as all drafts must be handed in together with the final copy, the teacher is able to check whether students have followed the writing process through its various stages.

In the girls' school, the teacher varies her method of conferencing to suit the needs of the students. With the less competent and more diffident writers, she:

1. checks the draft: paying particular attention to the parts that are underlined because the student likes them and those that are circled to indicate the writer's uncertainty;
2. asks about the focus of the writing: what it is that they wish to communicate;
3. gives the writer the choice of either reading the piece aloud to the teacher, or giving it to the teacher to read;
4. reverts to the 'underlined/circled' parts to ascertain the reasons for each, and discusses these with the student;
5. hones in on the parts about which the writer is uncertain, and while the student is talking about what she wants to say, scripts it;
6. discusses with the writer both the original and her scripted version, and together they decide which best serves the purpose of the writing.

In general, with these students, of whom there were five to six in the class, the emphasis is on 'getting it down on paper', rather than on crafting.

In conferencing more able writers, once she has checked the draft for proof-reading and identified those aspects of the writing with which they are either pleased or dissatisfied, she takes the writing and, with the student seated beside her, goes through it very thoroughly, questioning the writer's choice of:

1. content and ideas: what it is they want to say. Here, the objective is very precise: by isolating the major experience, emotion or mood, to keep the writing clear and uncluttered;
2. language: again, she is very exacting, picking out words and phrases which lack clarity and impact, are wordy and imprecise. Then, together, she and the student work to re-shape and sharpen images and phrases. The writer is made to justify, in particular, verbs, adverbs and adjectives, as they are used to create mood;
3. length of sentences as a conveyor of mood: short sentences to convey an active, agitated or excited mood, longer sentences to convey a dreamy, sleepy or relaxed mood.

Once the 'word crafting' is complete, the teacher asks the writer to look at the whole piece for sequence: are the paragraphs in the right or best order? Particular attention is paid to opening and concluding sentences and paragraphs.

At the end of each conference, which lasts about seven or eight minutes, the teacher makes notes in her writing log. Throughout the conference process, the student is in control of the writing, and while the teacher gives strong and constructive guidance, the decision to make the suggested changes always remains with the writer.

The approach to conferencing adopted by the teacher in the boys' school was less direct. Throughout, she remains affirmative and encouraging. By her use of open-ended questions, the initiative, action and ownership of the writing are retained by the writer. She does not force assistance on students, believing such coercion negates the ownership necessary to any form of creative and individual expression. As every student in the class has, at some time, sought her help, this is seen to be an indication that her strategies work.

Her techniques of conferencing could be described as follows:

1. students are expected to have proofread their writing, and to bring to the conference any drafts they may have written in the early stages of developing this particular piece;
2. they are asked to underline or in some way indicate the words and phrases they like and don't want to change;
3. they then indicate those things of which they are unsure and say why they are uneasy about them;
4. the teacher then queries some aspects of the writing; any changes that occur as a result of this discussion are made by the writer;
5. the teacher's method of extending the writer's ideas is to ask such questions as:
 - 'Have you ever seen ... ?'
 - 'Have you ever wondered about ... ?'
 - 'What do you want to say?'
 - 'Where would be the best place for this?'
 - 'That's a lovely image: how could you link it with the rest?'
 - 'Are you finding it hard? What's the problem?'
 - 'Do you think you think you could make it better?'
 - 'How could you expand it?'

Throughout the process, the ownership of the writing and any decision to alter, to redraft, to take the writing through to publication, or to abandon it and begin another piece, are always left to the student to make.

At the end of the conference, which takes anything from six to eight minutes, the teacher makes notes in her 'Student Profile' log, which the students are always free to read if they wish to.

PUBLICATION

It is important to face an audience, not to remain an anonymous writer. It really is an important growing-up phase: they have to face an audience, and the more they do, the more confident they will become. And to reinforce a writer all the time, to make them feel good about what they have produced, the writing has to have readers.

[Audience:] This is an area which I feel I make a real effort to cover. I feel it is very important, and there has to be a purpose, an end to writing. ... I still think finally, as human beings, we like to communicate and share with other people. So that common purpose, idea of the class communication, is very important ... So, often out of a project, one of the activities will be to produce a piece of polished writing for publication in the class book.

This section deals with the public aspects of writing: audience, sharing, editing and publication.

Audience

Writers need readers, therefore writing for an audience is essential. All the teachers at this level emphasise the importance of giving students opportunities to experience writing in a range of registers and for a variety of audiences. It is only when a writer confronts a reader, and gets reader feedback as to whether the writing is interesting and whether it makes sense, that she really knows if the purpose for which she wrote has been achieved.

These teachers promote opportunities for children to write for a variety of audiences because they are responsive to their students' interests in literature and aware of the need to cater for these, through providing resources for reading that will appeal to both boys and girls, as well as to different ethnic groups. Audiences for the students' writing include the teachers, their classroom peers, parents, other teachers, readers of the school magazine, and other publications where their writing is sometimes published.

Oral sharing

In all the classrooms, at all stages of the process, the students are encouraged to share their writing, whether in draft or final copy, in its entirety or just a part, and to give feedback that is positive, encouraging and constructive. The choice to share, however, is always left to the writer. Even when teachers read something they think they would like to share with the class, the writer's consent is always sought, and if the student demurs, the issue is not forced.

Most of the oral sharing which takes place is informal and the impetus is left to the students, although, occasionally, teachers ask if anyone would like to share something that they have written with the whole class. But while oral sharing on a one-to-one basis with a neighbour, friend or small group is a common practice in all classrooms, oral sharing of their writing with the whole class is not established as a formal everyday routine, except in the multicultural classroom.

In this room, the teacher has responded to the students' need to work together by creating an environment in which talking about their writing, seeking help from peers, and reading each other's work are accepted as the norm. At the beginning of each English class, plenty of time is allowed for students to share ideas and vocabulary, and to experiment with sentence structure, openings and endings. Students are given time to work in pairs and groups, both formally and informally. Because of the teacher's belief that these students share more effectively when they work within their own cultural groups, the choice of groups is usually left to the students. However, the teacher often invites the students to share their writing with the class, but if they do not wish to do so, no attempt is made to change their minds: this is for cultural as well as for ownership reasons.

Publication and editing

The publication of students' writing has a high priority for all these teachers for, as well as being seen as a means of motivating and stimulating students' interest in writing, publication and display are also valued for the contribution they make to the students' sense of pride and achievement, and to the development of a healthy self-concept.

While every effort is made to encourage reluctant and diffident students to publish something they have written, in the end the decision to publish is always left to the student. All the teachers stressed the importance of, and

the need for, teachers to respect this concept of ownership. In the boys' classroom, it is only after the 'rigorous' editing to which the writing is subjected at the final 'polishing' stage, that the writer makes his decision to publish.

Once the writer decides to publish, then there is an expectation on the part of the teacher that the published copy will be error-free, particularly concerning spelling, punctuation and other conventions of writing such as paragraphing. However, all the teachers admit that while this is their ideal, in practical terms it is not always attained; the time allocated to writing generally only allows for one conference before the writing is evaluated or assessed, and while errors are pointed out to students, they do not always take the time needed to present error-free copy. As a practical principle, all the teachers would probably agree that, faced with the dilemma of publishing less than perfect copy, it is better to publish the writer's own best efforts than not to publish at all, just because the teacher has not had the time to edit it.

Presentation of the writing is an important aspect of publishing and, although the teachers at this level are not quite so emphatic about the contribution illustrations make to the final publication, they do emphasise the importance of neat handwriting, and encourage students to type or word-process their published pieces.

While A4 paper is the most usual format for writing at this level, display boards and students' folders reveal a range of other formats for the presentation of writing. These include: posters, collages, booklets, projects, newspapers, mobiles, and class anthologies for pieces written around a common theme or in a specific genre. In all classrooms, students have writing folders in which to keep their published pieces. In the multicultural classroom, the final public presentation of the writing, particularly if it is a story with a cultural theme, is often an oral reading to the class, either by the writer herself or, as frequently happens, by the teacher who sees this request as the author's desire to give the writing mana, not as a denial of ownership on the part of the writer.

EVALUATION

I don't mark it where I can, but that's only because they are obsessed with marks and I personally find that a little bit unhealthy. ... When I mark something I can look at the last piece of writing they did and see that if I made a critical comment they have picked it up... so that I get an idea if they are actually developing. So, sometimes it's comment-writing, sometimes it's a grade, although I don't tend to think that grades have much meaning at fourth form level - it's really just for them.

I mark with a good thing commented upon and then something to improve. And even if it's that they've really worked hard at their presentation, then it's: 'Well done!'. And he doesn't feel he's failing again. He knows, but he's still trying.

[Assessment in the junior classes:] when I come to their creative writing, I don't have to give them a grade if I don't want to at all. I can just relate to it and I can write down what I think of it, and I can write down if I see an emotional problem, or if their ideas need enriching or their vocabulary needs widening, and I can write that in; I can say anything to them, and in the junior school, I don't have to give it a mark if I don't want to.

All the teachers at this level see assessment and evaluation as important elements of the writing programme. So that students can benefit from the exercise, the objectives by which their work is assessed are made clear to them prior to writing, and constantly clarified with them during the process of drafting, conferencing and redrafting.

Objectives

In the predominantly pakeha girls' school, the teacher believes that evaluation should be:

- diagnostic: particularly at the junior levels;
- selective: not all work needs to be seen;

- constructive: acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses;
- descriptive: comments are of greater value than marks;
- progressive: individual profiles monitor progress, act as a checklist and provide guidelines;
- focussed: aimed at specific skills and clearly defined criteria which are discussed with students prior to writing.

She also believes that evaluation must be varied and should include both oral and written teacher assessment, and self, peer and group student assessment. In her practice of assessment and evaluation, the teacher demonstrates all these features very effectively.

The teacher in the boys' school adheres very closely in her assessment procedures to the objectives set out in the school's English scheme. This states that marking should:

- give the teacher an indication of the effectiveness of any given topic;
- indicate the progress of individual students;
- provide the student with motivation.

Her classroom practice is characterised by the following:

- specific objectives and criteria are given for each teacher-designed writing assignment;
- for some types of work, objectives and criteria are worked out collaboratively by teacher and students;
- assessment is seen as an important indicator of students' strengths and of the points upon which each individual student needs to work.

In the top band co-educational classroom the objectives for assessment as stated in the English scheme are fully implemented by the teacher. These state that assessment at all levels should:

- be regular;
- be participatory;
- complement the learning process;
- motivate the students to learn;
- involve a range of techniques such as:
 - student-teacher conferences
 - peer group evaluation
 - self-evaluation
 - teacher marking;
- employ techniques orientated to reinforce what has been learnt.

The practice of the teacher in the multicultural girls' school accords very closely with the school's scheme. This sets out a comprehensive set of objectives and skills for writing, aimed at teaching students to write:

- clearly,
- accurately,
- appropriately,
- for a variety of purposes,
- in a range of registers.

The assessment is a personal description of the areas which have been mastered by the student and the extent to which they have been mastered.

One of the problems facing the teacher in the mixed ability co-educational class is that the school itself is currently undertaking an evaluation of its assessment procedures. Although traditionally an examination-free school in which the principles of the *Statement of Aims* have always governed the assessment of English, the introduction of the new requirements for the assessment of Sixth Form Certificate in all subjects has led to a reappraisal of assessment procedures throughout the school. At the fourth form level, assessment is:

- targeted at specific objectives for each piece of writing;
- focused on specific criteria established according to the genre, purpose and audience of each writing task.

This is one of the areas of teaching in which the teacher excels. The students know exactly what is expected of them for each writing task; how to go about achieving that end; and if they have not achieved the objective, what to do so that they can achieve it next time.

Feedback

All five teachers place great reliance upon feedback, whether oral or written, from peers or the teacher, as a valuable response to good writing and as an incentive for further writing.

The flexible physical environment and the relaxed working atmosphere of each classroom encourage spontaneous interaction among students at all stages of the writing process: pre-writing, drafting, peer conferencing, sharing and publishing. Teachers see the peer audience as the most appropriate one for children's writing; peer feedback, therefore, is recognised as one of the most important influences on the development of confidence among student writers. While students are often very honest in their response to other students' writing, they are also capable of valuing the effort that goes into writing, and of giving perceptive and constructive feedback.

Oral feedback is the most frequently used form of teacher response to students' writing. At the drafting stage, during roving and individual conferences, and at times of sharing and publication, oral feedback is the most usual response made to students' questions about, and problems with, writing. Wherever possible, the feedback is given in response to the students' initiation of the dialogue.

Feedback focuses on both the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing, and all the teachers ensure that, even when the feedback is critical, it is couched in encouraging, motivational, and culturally sensitive language, pitched at the individual student's level of understanding. At the same time, where appropriate, it is also challenging and provocative. Feedback is also appropriate to the topic, task, objectives and criteria established for the writing.

While the five teachers observed have been able to get students involved in making some form of written self-assessment of their own writing, it is more difficult to get them to give written feedback, other than an unthreatening 'I enjoyed this' or 'very good', to the writing of their peers. In the top

band co-educational class, students are beginning to make comments on the sheet the teacher provides near displayed work; and in the mixed ability co-educational class the teacher has developed evaluation sheets which are successfully used for evaluating the processes and activities associated with group writing. In the multicultural classroom, students are not expected to give written feedback on others' writing, although some students are beginning to give written feedback to the teacher, in response to her written comments on their drafts.

When conferencing drafts, most of the feedback is oral, with the students themselves left to make any changes that they have decided upon, after consultation with the teacher. However, this practice varies from student to student. Sometimes, comments are written in the margin of the draft, except for the teacher working in the boys' school. Out of respect for the student's ownership of the writing, she writes her comments on separate pieces of paper. In the multicultural classroom, the teacher writes in comments and corrections because she feels that, in this way, she can be sure that the students fully understand what is expected of them.

All the teachers discuss written comments with the students, to ensure that they are fully understood.

In their approaches to final copy, teachers' practices vary. In the predominantly pakeha girls' school, the teacher gives a written comment at the end of the completed work. This is usually short and concentrates on the positive features of the writing. In the boys' school, the teacher asks students to indicate what it is they want her to mark and to assess. Comments are always written on a separate piece of paper. This is also the practice of the teacher in the mixed ability, co-educational class. Comments made by the teacher in the multicultural girls' school on the finished work are generally an audience or reader response; at this stage of the writing the teacher believes that nothing is gained by making negative comments.

The question of marks and grades is a vexed one for these teachers. In theory, all believe that such practices are inappropriate to the aims and objectives of the writing process, but for three of the teachers, their preferred way of assessing their students' writing (i.e., by oral conferencing, followed by relevant and appropriate written feedback where necessary) is not wholly acceptable to the school's administration, and they are forced to make some compromises.

In the predominantly pakeha girls' school, where marks are occasionally given, the marks are always non-competitive with students evaluated against their own potential and abilities, rather than in relation to others within the class. When grades are assigned to finished work, as sometimes happens, the grade is always accompanied by an explanation of how it was arrived at.

In the boys' school, the teacher gives grades only when she has to, and then she gives two grades to each piece of work, one for effort and one for achievement. For the end-of-term reports, students are given grades for each subject. For this, students select the pieces of writing they want marked for this purpose, and when submitting these, state why they have chosen them. The assessment given to the student-selected pieces constitutes approximately 25 per cent of the final term assessment for English.

In the top band co-educational school, the school policy holds that all writing should be marked, and grades are given for all finished work. However, the teacher is hopeful that, as the result of a school-wide evaluation of assessment procedures, this policy will be changed in the near future.

Marks and grades are not used at junior class levels in the two other secondary schools represented in this study at the fourth form level.

Checklists and records

Except for one school, checklists as such are not used. However, each teacher holds very firmly to the policy of giving clear, specific objectives and criteria for each piece of writing. These objectives and criteria are always task, genre, register and audience specific.

In the predominantly pakeha girls' school, the scheme sets out very specific guidelines for writing which all teachers are expected to implement in the classroom. These relate to:

1. level skills:

- point of view writing;
- expectations of drafting and proofreading;
- summarising and ordering of ideas;

2. meaning, method and modes of writing:
 - response to reading or other modes of language;
 - point of view;
 - modelling form and style;
 - use of different register;
 - widening of ideas;
 - development of reasoning;
 - creative writing;
3. suggestions for how students can improve their writing:
 - make effective use of detail;
 - include only what is necessary to build towards the overall picture;
 - aim to use the best possible word in a particular place;
 - be precise;
 - create mood and atmosphere;
 - be convincing;
 - produce an effective opening and conclusion.

In many ways this could be the checklist implemented by all of the teachers observed at the fourth form level.

All the teachers use running profiles, or individual logs, to record students' development throughout the year. Notes are made of the date of the conference, topic, genre and stage of writing, strengths and weaknesses noted, directions for future development, and where applicable, the grade or mark given for the writing. These records are always made freely available to, and discussed with, the students.

ASSISTANCE AND INTERVENTION

The role of the teacher, as understood and practised by these five teachers, is to give to each student the most relevant and appropriate help possible at any and every stage of the writing process, without intruding on the student's need for independence, or curbing initiative and imagination. For the more able and confident writers, the teacher's major contribution to the writing process may be the establishment of a classroom environment and atmosphere conducive to writing; for less competent, more diffident writers, the teacher's contribution is a more explicit response to a student's expressed or perceived need for assistance.

General principles

Assistance, where needed, is given:

1. at the pre-writing stage, to:
 - promote, explore and develop ideas, topics, language, genres, styles, register, audience and conventions;
 - provide a variety of resources to motivate, stimulate, and challenge students' imagination such as reading, models, video clips, pictures and charts;
 - organise opportunities for pre-writing activities such as discussion, brainstorming, role-play and drama activities, language study and related exercises;
 - establish objectives and criteria for writing, specific to the writing task undertaken either by the class as a whole, or by individual students.
2. at the beginning stage of writing, to:
 - respond to individual requests for help;
 - offer assistance to students who are perceived to be experiencing difficulties in getting started;

- give individual help to ESL students, mainstreamed students or those identified as needing special help;
 - monitor the process in operation and to note the progress of individual students.
3. during the process, to:
- give roving and individual conferences relating to draft copy;
 - encourage peer proofreading and sharing of writing;
 - give editing, publishing and pre-assessment conferences.
4. at the conclusion of the writing period, to:
- provide opportunities for the students who so desire, to share writing, whether in draft or published copy, or in whole or in part;
 - encourage students to give audience or reader feedback to their peers;
 - arrange for the display and publication of students' writing.

At all times, the teacher's assistance is tailored to the specific abilities, interests and needs of individual students, or, if the writing is a group activity, to the needs of the group as a whole as well as to the needs of its individual members. Such assistance is always appropriate to the type of writing being undertaken at any given time.

The classroom practice of all these teachers is very similar. The teacher working with the multicultural class, however, follows an approach particularly suited to the cultural and social customs of Maori and Pacific Islands children. While she gives personal assistance to individual students, she does so in a 'public' manner; students are not withdrawn or isolated from the group; instead, the conference is given within the context of the larger group. This enables others to give support to the student being conferenced, and to learn ideas which may be of assistance to their own writing, from the suggestions being given to others.

Spelling

While all the teachers consider spelling to be important, they also believe that, in the initial stages of writing, students should be encouraged to write freely and spontaneously, concentrating on getting their ideas down on paper, without too much anxiety about spelling.

The following practices are adopted by these teachers:

1. when new or unfamiliar words occur in reading or pre-writing activities, their correct spelling is highlighted on the blackboard, and students' attention is drawn to any inconsistencies or irregularities in the spelling which may need to be remembered when using the word in writing;
2. students are expected to self and peer proof their drafts, and to alter inaccurate spelling prior to individual conferencing with the teacher;
3. dictionaries are meant to be used to check spelling; these skills are revised, and where necessary re-taught early in the year, and students are given frequent reminders to use dictionaries and the thesaurus, not only to check spelling but also to self-monitor correct, contextual usage of words;
4. spelling is always checked during the individual conference, and any errors overlooked, or not recognised by the student, are pointed out and discussed;
5. individual spelling lists are kept and their mastery monitored;
6. published or final copies are expected to be spelling perfect;
7. spelling is generally taught within the context of each student's writing.

In the mixed ability, co-educational class, the teacher is concerned about problems with spelling occurring with some male students leading to feelings of insecurity and shame which, in turn, create blocks towards writing. When this happens, the teacher has to spend considerable time working through these difficulties on a one-to-one level with the student.

In the multicultural classroom, considerable attention is paid to spelling. All mistakes are always indicated in the students' work, to show that they have been made. Students are encouraged to spell correctly, to reinforce the view that constant misspelling of words is not acceptable. With these children, simply telling them to use their dictionary to proofread is insufficient since their basic problems with the language often make dictionary checking an almost impossible task.

Punctuation

The approach to punctuation is similar to that taken for spelling with the emphasis in teaching and revision on the function of punctuation as a clarifier of meaning and a way of giving directions to the reader.

Strategies common to all teachers include the following:

1. punctuation is taught within the context of each student's writing, and according to each one's needs;
2. those with specific weaknesses in punctuation are given small group or individual tuition to help them overcome their problem;
3. from time to time, as the need arises, specific exercises involving punctuation are given to the whole class;
4. punctuation errors are part of the proofreading task and are always checked in conferencing;
5. final and published copy is expected to be punctuation perfect.

Grammar

I personally prefer to teach [grammar] as it comes out of something because I don't think they are very receptive of your saying: 'we are going to do such and such', but if I can say: 'Look, in those essays I took in last week, a lot of you seem to be having trouble with apostrophes, don't you know how to use them?', they will say: 'No, I don't know when you do such and such'. Then I will put up on the blackboard all the things that they say they're not sure of; then we will work through them, and do some exercises on them. But, on the other hand, having done that, I haven't really noticed a great deal of improvement! ... But I do think that the teaching of grammar should come out of what they are doing and that you can't impose it.

Research has shown that teaching grammar for grammar's sake, does not improve writing skills in any way. All such teaching should arise out of unit work.

Most of these students are foreign language students and their grammar tends to be good, although there are some who do need a lot of encouragement and monitoring of their accuracy. What I tend to do is to deal with it in context and this tends to be verbally as well. ... I expect them to have good standards of accurate expression for whatever audience they are writing for.

All students should be able to write in complete sentences, and to organise their work in paragraphs.... By the end of Form Four, students should be able to identify the basic parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns.... They should be familiar with the more common figures of speech: simile, metaphor and personification at least.

Often, if we are doing a particular piece of work, and I have noticed that they are making a common group of mistakes, then I'll decide to do a 'skills exercise' as a class, very quickly at the start of a lesson. ... I never do skill-type things in isolation from the programme or the task.

The teachers' practice in the classroom accords with the views expressed in their interviews. In the teaching of grammar, their approach is always to respond to the teaching and learning needs expressed by the students or perceived in their writing.

Voice and ownership

I've had some marvellous writing from kids, that was totally ungrammatical, unpunctuated, circular, involved, very tortuous, terrible, but there's a real person coming through, expressing something very deep in them.

One of the major concerns of all these teachers is that of enabling the student's own personal voice to emerge through the writing. They believe it is very important to empower students, by giving them the necessary skills and opportunities to communicate their ideas, feelings, attitudes and reactions. For this to happen, students need to feel trusted and to trust, to feel secure and unthreatened in the expression and sharing of themselves through their writing.

In the view of the teacher dealing with the top band co-educational class, students do have something to say about their ideas, views and feelings, but the school's emphasis on appropriateness, order, sequence and techniques, brings about what she calls 'alienated awareness': a feeling of inadequacy to express their ideas in a form acceptable to the system, and therefore a submersion of their individuality as writers. She believes that, if students are to write in their own voice, they need to have greater freedom in the choice of topics, style, register and audience, and to be constantly reinforced in their endeavours by positive, affirming feedback.

Voice is also considered important in teaching culturally different children to write in English. In the opinion of the teacher working with predominantly Maori and Pacific Islands students, teachers, somehow, have to find a way to develop understandings, skills and strategies that will enable the cultural voice, so strong in oral communication, to sound through these students' written language.

The concept of ownership of the writing is closely linked with that of voice. Taking responsibility for their writing, sharing it, and 'facing the audience', reinforce the student's ownership of the writing, as do display and publishing.

Teachers reinforce students' ownership of their writing by:

1. supporting and helping them to clarify their ideas without trying to change them;
2. leaving them alone when they are drafting, except when they actively seek assistance or give some indication of needing help;
3. in conferencing, allowing the initiative for discussion to come from the student, and taking the direction only when the student seems uncertain of what she wants or what is needed;
4. leaving the decision to share, to publish, to display and even to conference to the student.

The teachers' recognition and acknowledgement of the students' ownership of their writing are important factors in developing and reinforcing students' self-image, self-respect and sense of achievement.

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CHAPTER EIGHT: WRITING AT FORM SIX

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF AND APPROACHES TOWARDS WRITING

[Writing] has a very central place in my programme because if they can't express themselves in a number of different ways to suit different audiences and different purposes, then students really can't write for the various occasions through life when writing is needed.

[Writing] still has a very important place in my total programme, although, over the years, I've modified this and found place for other activities, particularly the use of video and film study and so on, which I see as utterly necessary. Nevertheless, I think the skills of writing are vitally important. ... I set a lot of written homework and in class would spend, perhaps, overall, about half the time in written activities of one kind or another.

[Writing] plays a crucial part in the classroom. I have been teaching thirteen years, and I guess in many ways I have a different attitude to the teaching of writing. In the junior school, I would focus more on mechanics than I would have done previously, but I still certainly allow time for the individual responses ... but I focus my activities much more than I used to. I certainly have been influenced by Graves.

I place [writing] as a top priority. I sometimes worry that I might be placing it as a too high priority ... I want kids to be clear and direct, regardless of the type of writing. I want them to be able to work within a framework and yet, still within that framework, have scope for creativity, and whatever directions and ideas they want to put in.

Of the four teachers whose views of writing are expressed above, one is teaching the National Sixth Form Certificate English Course, one a Local Sixth Form Certificate English Course and two are teaching a Local Sixth Form Certificate Course in Creative Writing. Yet all four view writing from a very similar perspective, and value it, not only as a tool for

learning, but as an instrument for interacting with, interpreting, and communicating personal thoughts and feelings, and as a means of responding to life's challenges, demands and pressures.

However, in their classroom programmes at the sixth form level, the focus given to writing differs greatly. In the English programmes, while writing features prominently in most activities, it is usually as a means to communicate other knowledge whether of literature, film, video, or language. In the creative writing courses writing itself is the aim of the programme. In the English courses, the time given to creative, personal writing is limited by the constraints of the other components of the course and, inevitably, this leads to a distinction between the approaches taken in the writing units, and those considered more suitable for literary criticism, expository essays, language studies and production studies. In the creative writing course, although the different genres, styles, purposes, registers and audiences of writing are recognised, the approach emphasises process rather than product. In the English courses, the students write, principally, to:

- provide an aesthetic experience,
- analyse and synthesize ideas,
- convey personal experience,
- discover and generate ideas,
- present facts and events,

and writing for oneself features only minimally; in the creative writing courses, however, writing for oneself, to convey personal experiences, to provide an aesthetic experience, and to discover and generate ideas, are seen as the major reasons for writing.

Another important distinction between the English courses and the Creative Writing courses is the motives of the students participating in each course. In the former, the students are taking English because it is a compulsory subject for all sixth form students wishing to qualify for Sixth Form Certificate, and while English is the preferred subject for some and writing is the component in the course which they most enjoy, for others English is a burden, and writing something which they find not only difficult but because of their feelings of inadequacy as writers, threatening and demoralizing as well. In the Creative Writing courses, the students are there of their own volition; they have elected to take the course because of their interest in writing and their desire to develop their skills as writers through writing.

Effective teaching and learning practices common to the four teachers include:

1. developing strong teacher/student relationships reinforced by the climate of relaxed trust in each classroom, enabling students to feel secure and confident in expressing their ideas, and to behave naturally and spontaneously;
2. establishing clear, focused objectives and criteria for writing that are general for the course as a whole, and specific to each particular writing task, i.e., genre, style, register, audience and assessment. In the national and local course this is true for all writing activities; in the creative writing course, while it is always the practice with the teacher-designated 'exercises' component of the course, in the 'personal writing' component, students have greater flexibility;
3. careful preparation of task sheets, models, resources for writing, displays, materials, and visits from writers, as well as ample opportunities for oral discussion among themselves and with the teacher, ensure that students are motivated and stimulated, and that they are not expected to write, as it were, 'cold';
4. promoting opportunities for sustained, silent writing, to allow students the time and space to come to grips with expressing their ideas in writing;
5. individual conferencing of students, aimed at giving feedback, teaching, advice, suggestions, support, and encouragement specifically targeted at students' individual needs as expressed in their writing, whether cultural, intellectual or emotional. In the individual conferencing of creative writing students, emphasis is generally on the editing and crafting aspects of writing, while in the English courses, particularly with the less competent writers, it is often dominated by getting ideas down on paper, and proofreading;
6. constant, positive feedback that, while encouraging the student and giving help when this is asked for or required, is non-intrusive and leaves the responsibility for, and ownership of, the writing with the student;

7. assessment procedures which recognise the special characteristics of writing as a creative, communicative and expressive art. In both creative writing courses, assessment of a formal nature is kept to a minimum; in the national and local English courses, the teachers have minimised the formal assessments required of the writing component in each course.

Common ground is also shared by these teachers when it comes to their concerns about the practices often associated with the teaching and learning of writing. Some of the areas about which they express concern are:

1. classroom teaching and learning environments that are tension-filled and stressful: writing, like any creative, expressive art, is seen as unlikely to develop under such conditions;
2. assumptions about any one process or approach as the best or only possible way of teaching or learning: teachers have to adapt their styles of teaching and their approaches to learning to suit the cultural diversity and the varying abilities and needs of the students within their classrooms;
3. modelling that is too directive, that focuses on the way the teacher writes: modelling, when undertaken by the teacher, is best used to give the students the example of the teacher as a fellow-writer; it is also regarded as more appropriate to bring in professional and published writers than for the teacher to model too much in front of the class, particularly in the creative writing course;
4. over-intervention and over-intrusion into the creative and imaginative processes of students' writing, particularly during the early phases of the writing process: such practices result in the loss of personal voice, take away the student's responsibility for the writing, and negate ownership;
5. over-emphasis on grammar and conventions in the early stages of writing: this can lead to students' belief that 'correctness' is of greater importance than voice;

6. assessment policies that are restrictive and place undue emphasis on marks, grades and percentages: writing, particularly the creative, expressive forms of personal writing, is best measured in other ways;
7. lack of a policy for writing across the curriculum: writing is regarded as a concern of all who teach the students, and there is a need for continuity and consistency in the way writing is perceived, both as a tool for learning and as a means of communication.

Four other issues, raised by individual teachers should be mentioned:

1. the importance of maintaining cultural voice in the writing of Maori and Pacific Islands students;
2. the attitudes of those who are teaching writing and the danger that, unless they themselves enjoy writing and understand the processes involved, they will kill it in the classroom;
3. the destructive influence of comments that are negative and overly critical;
4. the danger of teachers imposing too many criteria on the writing, which could lead to students' production of what the teacher wants rather than what they believe or feel.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

As with most secondary schools, classrooms are organised on the basis of subject specialist rooms. In three of the schools, subject specialists were assigned to a room of their own, but in the girls' school five English specialist rooms had to be shared among six English teachers. As a consequence, the sixth form class observed was peripatetic, and taught in a different room each day. This had a very disruptive effect upon the students' behaviour; on the days when they were in ordinary English classrooms, their concentration and work habits were far more settled than on the days when they were in either the drama room (a room with neither chairs nor tables) or the small seminar room (where the narrow horseshoe arrangement of the tables meant that the students were too physically close to each other) to have the sense of privacy and space needed for writing.

Of the three rooms used regularly by the other teachers, two were the type of English classrooms found in most New Zealand schools: functional, with display areas, cupboards, shelving and storage space, blackboards, overhead projector, cassette recorder and listening post. The third room was the facility that teachers dream about: spacious and carpeted, with a teaching/working section, a conferencing/tutoring area equipped with easy chairs and a low table, a reading/viewing/discussion area, mobile display units which also double as space dividers, and light, easy-to-move modular furniture. The creative writing class also had access, during class time, to the main computer room. In fact, the set-up for writing for this class was excellent, and was reflected in the work habits of the students.

The teacher taking the national English course teaches in a co-educational school where 10 of the 22 students were non-pakeha; the teacher taking the local English course teaches in a girls' school where one of the 18 students was a Maori. In both, the composition of the class was determined by the students' options in other subject areas, and in each class, student abilities were very mixed, ranging from very competent and confident students, to those who were struggling

to cope with sixth form studies. Both teachers taking the creative writing courses teach in co-educational schools. In one, there were 18 students: 15 girls and three boys; in the other, there were 17 students: 15 girls and two boys. In both classes, student abilities were very mixed, the only common denominator being that they had all elected to take creative writing and, as the creative writing course is not accepted as a replacement for English, they were all taking English as well, but in different classes and with different teachers. However, while one teacher accepts any student into the creative writing class, the other screens the students by an interview and demands from each a personal commitment to individual work as a pre-requisite for entry into the course.

All these teachers see the development of strong teacher/student relationships as very important for developing students' writing. They all believe that if students trust the teacher, they will have the confidence to take risks with their writing, to try new things, and to be unafraid of failure. They also realise the importance of getting to know each student on a personal basis, of learning something about each one's background and interests, and without being intrusive, to use this knowledge to assist their understanding of the students, both as individuals and as writers.

All the students interviewed commented upon their teachers in very favourable terms, above all emphasising their understanding, their abilities as teachers, their acceptance of the students as people, their willingness to spend time with them, to listen to them, and to be patient and tolerant. They all believed that, as a result of the teaching and guidance they had received during the course, their writing had improved.

While some of the students in the creative writing classes had doubts about whether their expectations of the course had been met, they did not see this as a criticism of the teacher, but of themselves and their attitudes. Yet, for all their doubts about what they had achieved in the year, they were convinced of one thing: that the so-called non-academic subjects, such as creative writing, made far greater demands upon their personal commitment to individual thought and effort than did other, less creative subjects, where success depended more upon listening in class, reading, following instructions and doing the tasks set.

THE WRITING PROCESS

This section deals with objectives, ideas and topics for writing, pre-writing activities, modelling, drafting and proofreading, as they are practised in these four classrooms, and with the teachers' responses to students' writing at each of these stages of the writing process.

Objectives

In the co-educational school where the national English course is followed at the sixth form level, the objectives are those set down in the syllabus as it was drawn up for the former University Entrance examination.

Currently, the school has no scheme: this is being drawn up by a group of teachers, of whom one is the teacher involved in this study. However, the school does set specific regulations for the implementation of the course.

These are as follows:

- essay: students must select four genres from: short story, expository writing, review, descriptive/imaginative/word picture writing, feature article;
- literature: novel, drama, poetry and one other genre, with two items of written work from two types: (a) essays, (b) creative/personal response for each, i.e., four pieces of writing;
- film: two films;
- language: oral and written.

For each piece of writing undertaken, the teacher sets specific objectives and criteria on which the students' writing will be assessed.

The objectives set for the local English course are as follows:

- to broaden the student's interest in language and literature and to lead into seventh form bursary and scholarship English, for those who wish to continue into tertiary education;
- to give students a basis for a lifetime of continuing interest in literature, drama, and language;
- to help students to express themselves in many different ways for many different purposes;
- to make a greater use of resources in the community;
- to give much greater emphasis to practical assignments, research projects, and productions of various kinds.

With each area and for each activity, specific objectives are given.

The objectives set for both creative writing courses are the same. Differences between the two courses relate more to course organisation and to the teaching style of the two teachers involved.

The general aim for the course is to:

- provide a course suitable for students who have an interest in and or talent in writing, with the intention of encouraging individuals to learn about writing through practical experimentation, reading and discussion. It is also hoped that the course will provide a basis for those students who are interested in writing as a career.

Specific objectives are designed to:

- stimulate a greater interest in, and awareness of, the possibilities of writing;

- encourage experimentation with the various written mediums (poetry and prose);
- foster a development and extension of ideas and techniques;
- develop the student's ability to view his/her own work and the work of others, in a discriminating way;
- develop individual talents with regard to the uniqueness of each student's approach.

Choice of topic

By necessity, the teacher of the national course finds that topics for writing are largely dominated by the syllabus requirements for literature and language, including the requirements for expository essays. However, within that context, she believes in responding to the varying abilities and needs of the students in the class, by providing ideas, suggestions, stimulation and motivation for students' writing, and through creating a classroom environment which encourages students to share ideas and to risk new ways of writing.

In selecting writing topics and tasks, she considers the interests, strengths, weaknesses and cultural preferences of each student, and tries to ensure that, within each topic, unit or theme, there are options appropriate to each student. Opportunities for writing in a variety of forms and styles are integrated into all language activities. In setting essays and in organising research assignments, she gives a wide range of possible topics. In this way, she is able to cater for all the students, and to respond to their different aspirations for writing.

The local English course is organised under five headings:

- language study,
- literature study,
- production study,
- writing workshop,
- oracy.

The writing workshop, which is the main focus of the writing programme, includes:

- study of different kinds of writing;
- imitation of models;
- writing for different audiences;
- expression of personal thoughts, opinions and feelings;
- creative writing;
- process writing and use of the word processor.

For this section of the course, the product is a folder of work; for sixth form assessment purposes at the end of the year, each student selects three pieces of writing from that folder for final appraisal.

Writing activities are also included in the literature, language and production modules of the course, and within each of these, the teacher leaves scope for the students to develop their own ideas.

In one of the two creative writing courses, the content is divided into two major components: exercises and personal writing.

The purpose of the exercises is to ensure that students have an understanding of, and practice in, the various writing genres. The exercises are teacher-selected and compulsory, but within each choices have been designed to reflect the different interests of the students and to respond to their specific needs as writers.

Within the personal component of the course there are two elements: the 'journal', which is a compulsory part of the course, although the choice of its content and style are left to each individual student and personal writing over which the student has complete control of both topic and style.

While the teacher does not enforce his ideas on the students, he still sees the generation and stimulation of ideas as an important aspect of his role as a teacher of writing.

In the second school, the content of the creative writing course is laid down as follows:

- experimentation in a variety of styles (poetry and prose);
- reading and discussion of works by a range of writers;
- reading and discussion of students' own work on a regular basis, to provide constructive criticism, offer ideas and suggestions, and to work through any problem areas;
- visits from local writers and other relevant people;
- visits outside the school which may provide stimulus for writing;
- publication of students' writing, wherever possible.

The course requires two categories of writing:

- (a) 'exercises': pieces written in response to models, starters, forms, stimuli and techniques supplied by the teacher. This is the compulsory component of the course;
- (b) 'extras': pieces of writing, written from the students' own ideas, and in the genre and style of their choosing.

Pre-writing activities

These teachers all recognise the necessity and importance of preparing students for writing, no less at this level than in any other area of the school. Such preparation includes: the clarification of objectives, establishing the criteria by which the writing will be assessed or evaluated, ensuring that teacher-designated tasks are fully understood, discussing students' own ideas and suggestions, and sharing experiences and problems, particularly with regard to writing.

With the students studying the national course, pre-writing activities include:

- whole class, group or partner discussion of topics, ideas and possible ways of approaching a specific writing task;

- brainstorming activities, firstly on an individual basis, and then pooled for the class on the blackboard;
- vocabulary and language extension activities, in whole class, group, or partner situations;
- in teacher-designated groups, planning of project-type activities related to language and research;
- models in a variety of styles taken from a range of published writers, newspapers, journals, students' own writing and writing by students from previous sixth form classes;
- before drafting begins, the teacher always ensures that the objectives, criteria and guidelines specific to each piece of writing are fully understood by each student. Where necessary, she takes those who need additional clarification, either by themselves or in a small group, depending on what she considers to be the most appropriate approach for each student. She believes, for example, that Maori and Pacific Islands students respond more positively to group tuition than to individual tutoring.

The teacher taking the local English course generally prepares students for writing through whole class discussion. She gives two reasons for this choice, firstly, that the students do not respond well in group discussion, and secondly, that the constant change of rooms makes the organisation of other types of preparation very difficult. Pre-writing activities for the writing that occurs outside the specific writing workshop module include understanding the importance of writing in a variety of genres to clarify their own ideas about literature, for example, writing letters, diary entries, case studies and interviews as alternatives to the standard essay. This is viewed as helping the students' writing through enlarging their understanding and challenging their imagination. She believes that many children lack ideas for writing, and that even those with more imagination need the inspiration that comes from talking and the exchange of ideas.

In the writing workshop module, workshop techniques are used, particularly in relation to personal, expressive writing such as poetry, stories and personal narrative. She believes that students gain a great deal from this collaborative

approach where the teacher's voice is just one of many. The differences perceived in the students' attitudes and response in the writing workshop situation, are causing the teacher to evaluate what is not happening in the other areas of the course.

Both teachers of creative writing see pre-writing as an essential element of the writing process. In the main, the preparation takes the form of general class discussion or dialogue with individual students. Both make extensive use of models such as students' own writing, examples from literature, newspaper and magazine editorials and articles, to stimulate ideas and to form a basis for analysis and discussion. This reading component and analysis of writing, in the opinion of one teacher, ensures that students do not become too introspective or locked into their own personal writing mode.

In dealing with exercises, expository essays and more structured forms of writing, a great deal of time is spent with class and individual discussion of ideas, style and approaches to and methods of writing. In many ways, the time spent in class is the pre-writing activity, since most of the writing is done outside the organised teacher-student contact time.

In the class in which journals are a compulsory component of the course, the teacher looks upon the journal as the writer's log or diary, both as an aid to daily writing, and as a source of ideas; sometimes, a thought or a snippet of writing entered in the journal emerges later as the seed or the germ of a short story or a poem.

Modelling

I do model with some classes and quite often with my sixth form, I will read them things that I have written.

I try to model. Sometimes things get in the way, but yes, I try to do that.

The urbanisation of our culture, the rise of 'Mana Maori' (Michael King), and its inevitable pakeha response, a certain flexing of our muscles internationally, all have jolted the national psyche. We need to keep ourselves finely tuned; we need to grab hold of the newer voices and images and bring them into the classroom. In prose, we have King, Hulme, McAuley. In film we have Steven, Preston, Murphy, Mita, Narbey. ... I would like to bring a lot more people into the school, and whenever there is a 'happening' out there, to take the students out to experience it.

If teachers model the act of writing themselves occasionally, they constantly make use of models from literature, as well as the students' own writing, in order to motivate and stimulate writing. Generally, they try to find examples which have high language content, as well as being interesting or illustrative of different genres and registers. They see the reading component of the courses and the discussion of published writing as ways of ensuring that the students' vision of writing is wider than just their own experiences and perspectives.

One of the teachers of the creative writing course often uses other writing to help students to help themselves. If he notes a problem in a student's writing, it sometimes helps to find an extract in which a writer has overcome a similar problem. Generally, he gives the illustrative piece to the student quite casually, without comment; in this way the student may find a way out of his particular hiatus by himself.

Drafting

This is something that worries me a bit, that they are still trying to write what we require. Giving them a lot of criteria is fine - it helps them to know where the limits are, but it also stops them from setting their own. ... Somehow to be able to allow the child's process, without chopping it off: if I could do that I'd be satisfied; just to know the right time, to see the right time, to be available if they are stuck, to get them past that so that they can keep going; so what they come to in the end is theirs, and they're pleased with it. It's honest, and you've helped towards that. I think that the whole process of being able to give sensible, sensitive evaluation is part of that, and not to intrude too far, but I think it's terribly difficult.

Again, the teachers of both the English courses and the creative writing courses emphasise the importance of the draft as the starting point, the raw material for which the student must take responsibility, and out of which she must fashion the final message. It is at the drafting stage of writing that the student begins to explore ideas, and to develop an individual style and approach to writing. Until the student has something on paper, the teacher has nothing on which to work with her.

All also believe that, in the initial phases of drafting, it is important to leave students alone and not to intervene unless there is a real need to help an individual student to get started. Unless there is a 'free flow' approach

to drafting and a period of sustained writing, students will not find their own voice, and those students who find writing more difficult are inclined to write what they think the teacher wants. With ESL students, or those who are genuinely struggling to get started, the teachers often sit alongside them and get them to talk about what they want to write. In the English classes, where this tends to be more of a problem than in the creative writing courses, both teachers often help diffident, reluctant or linguistically disadvantaged students by scripting the opening sentence with them.

Where computers are readily available to students in the creative writing course, the teacher sees their use as being particularly helpful in the drafting stage; in his opinion, the computer gives the writing a focus and an immediacy that is not present in pen-drafting and hand-publishing.

The approaches towards drafting of the teacher with several Maori and Pacific Islands students in her classroom, are particularly relevant. By working closely with them in the early stages of drafting, she tries to support their individual style in creative, personal and expressive writing while, at the same time, giving them the skills necessary for the more structured and expository forms of writing. As she explained in her interview:

I have some lovely Polynesian kids who write beautifully. They write differently; they've got a slightly more circular style. ... I do think that there's a difference in the way it goes on paper and the way it's thought through, and I've got to be sensitive to that, to get the best out of them. I find that aspect of language and writing very interesting.

Proofreading

As a general rule this is not a major issue at the sixth form level. In the English classes, there is an expectation that students will do their own proof-reading before being conferenced or handing in their work for marking.

In the classroom where there are several Maori and Pacific Islands students, the teacher often sits down with those who are having difficulties and proof-reads with them. In the girls' class, many seem to prefer to ask their peers how to spell a word, than to use a dictionary, and the teacher often has to remind them that dictionaries are designed to help with spelling as well as with meaning.

In both creative writing classes, the students' proofreading skills are generally sound, as is the students' mastery of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The concern of these teachers is with the crafting of the writing, and they expect the students themselves to take responsibility for removing surface errors.

CONFERENCING TECHNIQUES

Conferencing is an integral part of what the sixth form teachers practise in the classroom and the responding techniques they use in conferencing assist in promoting students' confidence and competence as writers.

Roving conferences

While its focus varies slightly from teacher to teacher, the roving conference is an important feature of the conferencing programme operating in each classroom. According to the teacher of the national English course, it is the most effective form of responding to students' writing, as it enables her to give support and assistance to students at the time, and at the point, when it is most needed. Such assistance is essentially based on needs and as she moves quietly about the classroom, observing, making affirmative comments where the writing is going well, and being careful not to intrude upon the students' concentration, any student who needs assistance with ideas, organisation, vocabulary, proof-reading or editing is provided with the help required, unobtrusively and positively.

The teacher of the local English course uses what she terms 'mini conferences' at various stages of the writing process. At the very beginning of the drafting stage, she uses the 'mini-conference' to establish contact with the students. During the 'intense' time of drafting, she restricts its use to those who, either by direct request or implicit behaviour, indicate a need for assistance in getting started. At other times, the 'mini' or roving conference may be used to give help with organisation of the writing, sequence, redrafting and editing.

For one of the teachers of the creative writing courses, little distinction is made between roving and individual conferencing. In his view, the most effective and successful way of improving students' writing is making verbal comments, together with a few written comments, suggestions and questions on the writing as it is happening. The other creative writing teacher uses roving conferences for monitoring students' mood and attitude, and for giving passing encouragement and support rather than for getting involved in the detail of

the writing. For him, the roving conference is a type of booster injection for keeping the writing going.

Peer and group conferences

All teachers believe in the principle of peer conferencing and encourage it at all stages of the writing process. Peer conferencing is seen as valuable in contributing to students' understanding of register and audience. In this respect, the feedback they receive from their peers is often more effective in keeping students' writing relevant and realistic than the comments of the teacher. However, students in the creative writing courses are free to choose for themselves whether or not they wish to peer conference. But while most students were happy to share ideas at the pre-writing stage, to give feedback to each other on writing tasks common to all members of the class, and to share some aspects of personal writing, whether in draft or finished script, very few actually conferenced each other apart from showing appreciation of the writing as a reader.

Except for the 'writing workshop' component in the local English course, group conferencing is not a feature of the writing programmes. Even in this situation, the interaction is more related to sharing and responding to each other's writing, to being a sympathetic and empathetic audience, than to being a critic of the writing through challenging the language, style and literary presentation of the ideas. The actual task of crafting the writing is not undertaken by the group, but is seen as the teacher's role in collaboration with the individual writer.

Again, the distinction between group discussion and sharing, and group conferencing needs to be made. Students at this stage of their development, even in the creative writing classes, do not apply the same skills of contextual analysis and discrimination to the writing of their peers that they apply to set works of literature, perhaps because they are still too unsure of their own voice as writers to take the risks necessary to craft their writing with any one other than the teacher, in whom they have most confidence. The nearest they come to this is in discussing the writing from the set 'exercises'. Here, because the objectives and criteria have been established by the teacher and discussed beforehand, they are able to be more objective and less sensitive to criticism. However, apart from one or two students, when dealing with personal, self-chosen writing, they seem less able to make the distinction between criticism of the writer and of the writing. In large measure, it is

their awareness and recognition of the diffidence and self-doubt experienced by young writers, and their acceptance of students' right to privacy, that make these four teachers so effective as facilitators of students' writing.

Individual conferences

As already mentioned, the teacher of the national course sees the roving conference as the form of conferencing best suited to the needs of her students. Any comments and discussion have a public domain which is often more acceptable and less threatening to the Maori and Pacific Islands students (nearly half of her class) than the private, more isolated approach traditionally associated with individual conferencing. Moreover, she also finds that the pakeha students respond well to this communal type of conferencing.

In her individual conferencing of students, the teacher of the local course favours an approach which allows the student to take the initiative and leaves the teacher free to act as a sounding board as well as a critic. She sees this as leaving decisions about changes, additions and deletions to the writer and thereby reinforcing the concept of ownership. Individual conferences of this nature are given:

1. when the student is ready to read the draft to the teacher: at this stage she sees herself as a resource person who queries order, sequence and expression, and suggests alternatives in relation to vocabulary, beginnings and endings. At this draft stage of writing, conferencing is always oral and nothing is written by the teacher;
2. when the student feels that the writing is in its final form, she has the choice of either conferencing it with the teacher or submitting it for comment. Whichever choice is made - and for most it is the conference - the teacher gives written feedback, but the comments are still suggestive rather than directive;
3. at the editing stage, which is the final pre-formal assessment for all writing: at this point, scripts are marked prior to the conference, and the feedback is always oral.

In their approach to individual conferencing, for both teachers of creative writing being open to students and allowing them to choose the time for in-depth conferencing, are seen as very important factors in responding effectively

to students' needs as writers. However, they differ quite considerably in the techniques used for conferencing.

In conferencing the 'first draft' one teacher becomes very involved in discussing with the writer what works in the writing, and ways in which it can be improved. Written responses often focus on the sections of the writing which work, but he does not impose his views. If the student does not respond positively to his comments, he withdraws, but still maintains an interest in the writing and gives support to the writer when this is sought. At the final stage, when the student feels satisfied with the writing, the conferencing becomes an editorial discussion. At this stage, the teacher's role as a crafter of the writing becomes more important and more exacting, but the decision to accept or reject the editorial changes made by the teacher still remains with the writer. Although most of the students accept the teacher's editorial changes, two or three of the more competent and confident writers in the group, do exercise their right to reject the teacher's changes in favour of their original script.

The second teacher conferences drafts or segments of writing with the student, after having read the script and made written comments. These are usually written on a separate sheet of paper, as questions, opinions and suggestions for clarification, and deal with re-ordering, paring or amplification of the writing. The individual conference takes place only after the student has had time to reflect upon these comments, or perhaps redraft the writing in response to the criticisms made. In this way, the students are given an opportunity to alter their writing without feeling unduly threatened; they have had time to think about the comments and are usually more open to constructive criticism. At the editing stage, when the writer has decided to publish a piece, the conferencing becomes more of a crafting session, with the teacher and the writer working collaboratively on the script. However, the final responsibility for any changes made to the text, rests with the student as the owner of the writing, and in most cases, the teacher's suggestions are accepted.

PUBLICATION

I've got it all over my windows in the classroom ... I don't think many people publish sixth form writing ... and the readers will be the classes who come in, and they look and they say: 'Gee, that's good', and I think that's a spin-off.

[Readers:] There will be a variety. They read their own; their friends will certainly read it; often parents and guardians or whoever is at home, are involved ... other teachers. ... We publish things in the school newspaper, so they'll be read by the school ... I've had two or three students in my writing class who have had writing published outside school, that would be **More** magazine and the local newspaper.

We're starting a thing in our library which will be a shelf full of kids' writing, of pamphlets and things, ones that are bound well enough to hold together. ... I spend a lot of time allowing them to read their own stuff.

That sixth form writers need readers no less than any other students in the school is well understood by each of these teachers who endeavour to provide readers for their students' writing, both in and outside the classroom.

Audience

Audience, not simply the hypothetical audience for whom students write when they select a topic and write in a given style and register, but a real audience of living readers who will respond in audible or readable language to what the writer has said, is considered a key to writing.

To this end, all the teachers observed at the sixth form level try to provide a wider audience for their student writers than just themselves, their peers and their teacher.

Students' work is displayed in the classroom, published in the school newspaper and school magazine, collected in classroom anthologies and made available, either in the classroom or in the library, for other students to read. The choice to publish is always left with the student, although teachers do encourage diffident and less confident writers to face a reading audience in this way. At the end of the year, each of the creative writing classes brings out a volume of its own writing; this is sold to students, parents and friends of the school.

Oral sharing

Opportunities for students to share their writing orally with their peers exist at all stages of the writing, although this interaction is generally informal and tends to occur spontaneously. Again, decisions related to sharing are left to the writer to make. In oral sharing, the emphasis tends to be on segments of the writing that succeed, or with which the writer is particularly satisfied, rather than on longer pieces of writing. In promoting oral sharing, the teachers believe that all students enjoy hearing their writing read, and begin to accept differing perceptions of what is regarded as interesting in a piece of writing.

Publication and editing

Generally, students' work is either handwritten, typed or word-processed, and kept in a folder. Occasionally, particularly in the sixth form English classes, if the writing has developed from a group activity, the presentation may be a visual representation.

At the sixth form level, editing is concerned only minimally with grammar, spelling, punctuation and other surface conventions of writing, although the teachers expect final copy and published writing to be error-free. Its major focus is on crafting, the fine-tuning of the writing. It takes into account the objectives and criteria given for the writing, and the topic and genre. It is concerned with register, appropriateness to the intended audience, language, mood and sincerity. In general, the final editing of any piece of writing is a collaborative task, with suggested changes fully discussed with the writer, with whom the final editorial decisions rest.

EVALUATION

[Creative Writing:] The programme is not suited to evaluation by examination, as it is a practical course which largely involves an on-going assessment through discussion with students about the writing they are producing. In this way students will be encouraged to self-evaluate, thereby aiding their further development. Students will keep a folio of all their completed products, selecting a number of pieces for submission to a panel for assessment. Further evaluation will occur as a result of the success students have in getting their works published.

I do give marks, obviously for sixth form certificate purposes. I don't mangle them; I mark for specific things. I will definitely always make positive comments.

While all the teachers concerned accept evaluation as integral to writing, they do not believe that marks, grades or examinations are valid ways to assess and evaluate writing. Therefore, in assessing either the writing component in the English course or the whole course in the creative writing courses, the final marks and grades required by sixth form certificate assessment are seen as inappropriate to writing as a personal, creative and expressive form of communication. However, all have adopted techniques of assessment and evaluation which, while satisfying the objectives of their schools' sixth form assessment plans, still allow them the freedom to assess their students' writing in ways that they consider relevant and appropriate to the writing process.

Objectives

The assessment plan of the school following the national course gives no special weighting to the writing component of the course. Instead, writing is subsumed under essay and literature. However, in marking each piece of writing, the teacher ensures that, as well as being given a mark out of 20, as laid down in the assessment plan for English, the students are made fully aware of the

criteria on which it is assessed, and the mark is always accompanied by comments indicating both the strengths and weaknesses of the writing.

In the local English course, the writing workshop is assessed separately from the writing which occurs in the language, literature and production studies. The weighting given to the writing workshop is 25 per cent of the final mark, with 15 per cent for the writing folder and 10 per cent for the final examination. Selection of the writing submitted in the folder is left to the student. Assessment objectives stated in the assessment plan are:

- writing in different and appropriate registers, each of which will have its own criteria, with special emphasis on the communication of feelings, thoughts and opinions;
- mechanical ability;
- self evaluation.

In addition, appropriate criteria for the objectives are established for each piece of writing; for individual writing assignments, criteria are negotiated with the student. Every effort is made to ensure that assessment criteria are appropriate to the genre and register of the writing. Evaluation and assessment are areas in which the teacher feels least comfortable because she believes students' personal satisfaction with the writing is more important than a mark or grade assigned to it by a teacher.

In the first of the creative writing courses, the teacher makes a clear distinction between evaluation and assessment. Assessment is the formal result or achievement and, in relation to this course, specific to sixth form certificate, while evaluation is used throughout the year in interacting with the student. Except for sixth form certificate, evaluation is expressed in comments only, not in marks or grades. Objectives and criteria to assist in the process of writing are established for each exercise, and discussed with students, collectively and individually.

The weightings for each component of the course are as follows:

- journal: 30 per cent; viewed every four to six weeks; three assessments;

- exercises: 30 per cent; ability to write in different genres: for example: narrative prose, poetry, play script, critical review; three assessments;
- personal anthology: 40 per cent; personal writing in final form; two assessments.

In the second creative writing course, formal assessments of the writing are not made during the process; such assessments are restricted to the end of the course, when each student presents a folio of edited, self-selected pieces of writing for assessment. Each folio's mark and grade is then determined by a team of teachers, the principal criteria being the quality of the writing and productivity.

Feedback

Feedback, both oral and written, from both students and teachers, is given a high priority by all teachers.

In both the English and creative writing courses, the relaxed and informal environment of the classrooms, the way the courses are organised, and the style of teaching, ensure that there are many opportunities for students to give peer feedback on all aspects and at all stages of the writing.

In the English courses, while the opportunities for oral feedback are sometimes more structured, in that the teacher determines the criteria on which the feedback is to be based, in the creative writing courses, peer feedback is rarely formalised. Generally, the students are very responsive to these opportunities. However, in the girls' school, the students seem more reluctant to give feedback to each other, even when the criteria are carefully established by the teacher. The students are better at sharing ideas and exploring suggestions for writing at the formative, pre-writing stage of the process. Nonetheless, they enjoy reading each other's writing.

Throughout the writing process, all teachers give constant oral feedback: during roving and individual conferences, at the draft, editing and pre-assessment stages of the writing, and on shared or published work.

The teachers' feedback is couched in affirmative, empowering and encouraging terms. Both strengths and weaknesses are discussed, but weaknesses are always dealt with in relation to what can be improved and how, not in terms of what is wrong or incorrect.

Although in peer conferencing, the teachers encourage students to give written feedback, most students resist this aspect of peer evaluation and the teachers do not force the issue. However, in all four classrooms, some students are beginning to make written self-evaluations of their own work and to respond, in written form, to the questions asked and challenges posed by teachers.

The teachers' practices with regard to written feedback vary, particularly at the drafting stage. With two, written feedback is given as a reminder and reinforcement of the oral feedback that constitutes the conference; one, having spotted some difficulty while giving roving conferences, will often collect the draft and, having isolated one or two of the major problem areas, will concentrate her written comments on these. Such written feedback is never given 'cold' to the students; it is discussed fully with the writer at the time it is returned. This practice has been found particularly beneficial for Maori and Pacific Islands students writing literary criticism and expository essays. As already mentioned, the fourth teacher, prior to conferencing, focuses quite intensive written feedback on the draft script, discussing it only after the student has had time to absorb its implications for the writing.

Only one teacher gives written feedback at the end of the process. At this stage, the feedback is commendatory and is frequently linked back to comments made on earlier pieces of writing, to ensure that students become aware of their development as writers.

ASSISTANCE AND INTERVENTION

All the sixth form teachers are ready to respond to their students' needs for assistance at every stage of the writing process, and with any aspect of the writing.

General principles

When introducing a unit, a theme, or an exercise, all the teachers give considerable time to the generation of ideas through discussion, shared readings, analysis of models for writing, and the setting of specific objectives and criteria for the writing.

During the drafting stages of the writing, teacher assistance is determined by individual need. For those for whom English is a second language, or Maori and Pacific Islands students, who are often more comfortable with the oral forms of language than with the written, and students whose overall language performance is somewhat limited, assistance is given whenever requested, or when the teacher intuitively feels that some sort of help is needed so that the student does not become bogged down and frustrated.

At the conferencing stages of the process the writing itself is the focus of the assistance given but, wherever possible, the teacher seeks the responsive rather than the initiating role in the dialogue. Throughout the conferencing, the teacher is mindful of the student's ownership of the writing, and the importance of allowing the responsibility for the writing to remain with the writer.

Practices common to all the teachers include:

- oral, focused, whole class sharing of ideas and suggestions, sometimes followed by group activities;

- carefully organised task sheets, prepared by the teacher as a guide for each major writing assignment or exercise.

These always include objectives and criteria, specific to the genre, theme, register and audience of the writing activity;

- modelling and analysis of models from other writers;
- roving conferences to monitor progress, give assistance, sustain motivation, and provide ongoing stimulation;
- individual conferences, with an emphasis on oral dialogue and feedback;
- oral comments and constructive feedback at the sharing and publishing stages of the writing;
- written feedback when teachers consider this to be the most appropriate form of assistance to students as writers;
- use of other language modes (e.g., viewing, shaping, moving, listening, reading) to assist in clarifying perspective and to help students to understand the relationship between verbal, non-verbal and visual language and communication;
- visits from 'published' writers.

Grammar and conventions

[Grammar:] I think it has a place; it is important to have something that sounds right and is considered proper. I think it is part of the standard, but I do not have grammar lessons to a great extent. I do correct on a personal basis, it's the only way I can do it. It's very time-consuming but I try to do it on a one-to-one basis. One of the most common things I find that I have to deal with is incomplete sentences. I don't use fancy terms for relative clauses: I say, you can lift that out and still the sentence will hang together as long as you have that essential verb. ... If I can iron out some of those things, I think that makes for a better end product, but I don't go about it in any formal way.

I teach some sort of descriptive grammar at the sixth form; it's linked with style, so I would teach things like levels of vocabulary, the function of different kinds of sentences ... comparing different pieces of writing ... so that girls can see that language is a tool for them, that the more power they have over it, the more power they will achieve through their writing. That is actually central to my belief about English. ... We try to keep the whole concept of language and grammar as one which allows them to be clear and courteous to their readers, and to choose the style they want.

I certainly don't teach any kind of prescriptive grammar in itself. ... I would teach contextual things ... like sentencing ... I try to work it in with what we are doing and I will certainly draw lessons out from their material. I've tried different things. I've observed different things, but I've yet to be convinced that the efforts are warranted.

These extracts from the interview transcripts of the sixth form teachers, show that while grammar is seen as a tool of language which, when correctly used, clarifies thought and expression and makes the meaning clearer to the audience, it is not a focus for general class teaching. Rather, the approach adopted is individual, based on the writing under discussion, and focused on the needs of students as writers, not on the grammar as an end in itself. All the teachers would agree with the belief of one of them that, at this stage of their writing development, students have either 'got' or 'not got' grammar, and that when such conventions are omitted from their writing, it is part of the editorial role of the teacher to provide them.

Voice and ownership

Issues of voice and ownership for these teachers are very important principles and are constantly borne in mind when considering their students' writing. Their whole approach to writing and the way in which they interact with students, ensures that the emergence of the student's voice is encouraged. The teacher's role is seen as giving students the tools, skills and power necessary to express their ideas, feelings and opinions through writing.

When working with Maori and Pacific Islands students, all agree that it is important to recognise the influence that their cultural background, with its emphasis on oral traditions and communication, has upon their style of writing, and to encourage the expression of their personal voice in writing in culturally sensitive ways.

Above all, these teachers emphasise the importance of leaving the responsibility for the writing with the students. The teacher's role is to guide, to facilitate and to offer suggestions for editing and crafting, in a non-directive, non-intrusive manner. Decisions about sharing, conferencing, editing, publishing and even the selection of pieces to be submitted for the final assessment for sixth form assessment, are left with the students in order to reinforce ownership of their own writing.

CHAPTER NINE: OVERVIEWS OF RESPONSES TO WRITING AT THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

PART ONE: PRIMARY SCHOOL

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF AND APPROACHES TO WRITING

Among the fifteen teachers observed in primary schools there was remarkable consistency in their views of and approaches towards the teaching of writing. All teachers saw writing as an integral component of language and in teaching writing, placed emphasis on its associations with both oral language and reading activities. Each considered the process by which pupils develop competence and confidence as writers to be more important than the product. The major components of the process, as understood and practised by these teachers, included: pre-writing activities, choice of topic, drafting, proof-reading, conferencing, editing and publication, with the sharing of writing with an audience as an important factor at all stages of the process. All believed that writing should be a daily undertaking, and that while this daily opportunity to write relates more specifically to personal, expressive and creative writing, the principles that govern writing should be the same across all areas of the curriculum.

In general, all teachers agreed on the major strengths of the process approach to writing: its recognition of individual rates of learning and needs, individual differences and preferences; its encouragement of learning through peers by sharing ideas rather than from views imposed by the teacher; its provision of a comforting structure and set of routines in a trusting and supportive environment; its reinforcement of individual voice and ownership of writing. Similarly, some concerns about the teaching of writing were shared by all teachers: total freedom in the selection of all topics for writing; excessive modelling, which, together with over-intervention, could lead to loss of spontaneity and individual voice in writing; over-emphasis on creative and imaginative writing, at the expense of fostering skills related to factual or expository writing.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

In the organisation of the setting for writing, all the teachers observed in their classroom made great efforts to create an environment that was child-centred, purposeful, conducive to learning, and visually appealing. In each of the fifteen classrooms, the written word was an integral part of the learning environment with the display of children's work serving a motivational role as well as emphasising children's ownership.

In all but one of the classrooms, where the constraints imposed by the school's organisational policy militated against the learning needs of its intermediate level pupils, the organisation of space and seating arrangements recognised both the privacy required for individual writing, and the flexibility needed to provide opportunities for working and sharing with others.

Relationships between teachers and children in all classes were relaxed, with an emphasis by teachers on developing initiative, independence and co-operation. The needs of Maori and Pacific Islands children were taken into account in a sensitive and culturally aware manner. Where there were differences, these reflected the personalities of the teachers, and made little difference to the teachers' understanding of each child's needs. In most of the classes, pupils worked well together, whether in pairs or in groups, formally or informally, sharing their writing and conducting conferences with assurance. For the most part, from the junior classes to Form Two, there was little discernible difference in attitudes to writing between boys and girls, nor was there overt rivalry between them. Neither, in any of the classrooms, did there appear to be any racial discrimination among the pupils.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Objectives

Given the need to formulate objectives appropriate and responsive to children's growth in competence and confidence as writers, as they progress from junior classes to Form Two, the fifteen teachers shared a common perspective on the goals considered important for writing. These included:

- establishing an environment in which pupils can develop confidence in writing;
- developing a writing programme based upon children's own interests and knowledge;
- providing daily opportunities to write;
- encouraging pupils to think clearly, express themselves fluently, and to communicate effectively, with regard to meaning, purpose and audience;
- enabling children to develop confidence in expressing their own voice, and thus to 'own' their writing;
- developing awareness of the need for self-evaluation, proofreading and editing;
- experimenting with a variety of genres or forms and increasing confidence in handling these;
- using writing for a variety of purposes, and integrating it into all aspects of the curriculum.

Ideas and topics

In the junior and middle school classes, pupils most often chose their own topics for writing, drawn from their own experience, personal and shared reading, thematic studies, and knowledge of local or current events. Most of the teachers, however, were ready to support pupils with less confidence by assisting in the generation of ideas and by extending or clarifying them, and occasionally set topics or themes for the whole class to write on. At the intermediate level, none of the teachers allowed total freedom of choice and all had a very influential role to play in the selection of topics and in the fostering of ideas.

Pre-writing activities

From junior class to Form Two, preparation for writing was considered vital by all teachers, and various language activities were used to generate ideas: discussion in whole class or small group situations, brainstorming, reading, drama and role-play activities, visual and audio stimulus. As well as generating ideas for writing, pre-writing activities focus on aspects of writing such as purpose, audience, genre, presentation, publication, and the skills and conventions of writing, including proofreading and editing. All teachers emphasised the importance of small group and one-to-one discussion for ESL and bilingual pupils who may lack sufficient depth of language to encode their ideas.

Modelling

In the junior classes modelling the process was considered to be more important than a model product. In this way story outlines and sequencing of ideas, often arising from the pupils, could be demonstrated, as well as language conventions. At the middle school level, with one exception, teachers still regarded modelling as important, but varied in the frequency with which they modelled, from daily in the ten minutes or so dedicated to sustained silent writing, to once a week. As in the junior classes, modelling was generally confined to illustrating the processes associated with writing. In the sense of writing in front of the class to demonstrate appropriate language, ideas and structure, modelling was used very rarely by the teachers observed at the intermediate level. Concern about imitation, fear of inhibiting creativity, the number of children with special needs in the classroom, and suitability of the teacher as a model were among the reasons offered for the absence of modelling. However, extracts from established writers, good sentences or phrases from other pupils' writing, outlines of possible layouts, cards, charts and other forms of written presentation, were often used as models for children's writing.

Drafting

Drafting was seen by all fifteen teachers as a means of getting ideas down on paper and for clarifying meaning through subsequent revision; consequently, risk-taking such as 'invented' or 'tried' spelling was encouraged at all levels, in order to keep the ideas flowing. Techniques for drafting included the use of scrap or rough paper, writing in pencil on every second line, with problem words ringed in pen. At the junior class level, while proofreading was generally limited to reading the writing to pick up spelling errors or to check 'invented' spelling in the dictionary, in the middle and intermediate classes, the more competent writers were encouraged to revise with others and by themselves, adding and deleting ideas as well as proofreading. At the intermediate level, in particular, drafts were considered desirable as they provided pupils with an opportunity to cross out and rearrange their ideas freely. At this level, one teacher commented that some pupils often wrote two drafts before a final version was written; in another class, during drafting, silence was required apart from whispered questions or comments; in a class with a high percentage of Maori and Pacific Islands students, the teacher recognised these children's cultural preference for sharing ideas as they drafted. One teacher always included points about drafting in unit outlines.

Proofreading

Proofreading was seen by all teachers as the work that must be done to writing, as far as possible by the child, to make it understandable to readers. In the junior classes, proofreading was mainly confined to spelling, and elementary grammar and punctuation. Established procedures such as reading the writing aloud, self-proofing and checking with a peer before checking with the teacher, were adopted in each class. At the intermediate level, the more competent writers were beginning to notice awkwardness in phrasing or lapses in paragraphing. With the exception of children with special teaching needs or bilingual/ESL pupils, self-proofing was regarded as a prerequisite to conferencing with the teacher.

CONFERENCING TECHNIQUES

Throughout the primary school classrooms, four kinds of conferencing were observed: roving conferences, when the teacher went to pupils around the classroom who seemed to need most help; group conferences, when children with similar needs were helped together; peer conferences, when children helped each other; and individual conferences, when the teacher and pupil met on a regular basis for a semi-formal dialogue on aspects of the pupil's writing.

Roving conferences

At all levels, roving conferences were a feature of daily classroom practice. However, whereas in the junior classes, this relatively brief interaction was seen as an important way of assisting those with specific problems and of motivating, encouraging, supporting and monitoring the writing of all children, in the middle school and intermediate classes, the roving conference was most frequently used to give help to less confident writers, particularly Maori and Pacific Islands children, mainstreamed and ESL pupils. In all the classes observed, roving conferences were carried out in an affirmative, non-judgemental and non-intrusive way.

Group conferences

In the junior and middle school classes, group conferences were considered a regular feature of the writing programme. In the junior classes, children were organised in groups according to shared problems or needs at a particular stage of writing. While this practice was also observed in the middle school, at this level most teachers also conferenced established groups of children on a regular basis. At the intermediate level, group conferences to discuss aspects of writing were rarely held, being restricted in most classes to occasions when several children experiencing a similar, recurring problem could be helped, or to group project work when the teacher would offer suggestions on the activity involved.

Peer conferences

At all levels peer conferences were frequent and accepted as an integral part of each class, with pupils reading and discussing writing together, proofreading and giving suggestions for new topics, presentation and publication. However, in one class at Form Two level, the term 'peer conferencing' was not used, nor was the process perceived by the teacher or pupils as part of the writing process, although pupils were occasionally permitted to share ideas for a set period of time.

Individual conferences

The fifteen primary teachers all looked upon the individual conference as quality teaching time. These conferences functioned as support structures, both to encourage children to retain an interest in their drafts and as an opportunity for teachers to respond to the writing of individuals. Emphasis was placed on ownership and control of the writing by the pupil, so the thrust of these conferences tended to be positive, with questions and comments designed to allow pupils to describe what they were trying to do in their writing and to have time to respond to the teacher's remarks. All teachers used some form of running record or pupil profile in which to summarise each pupil's individual conference.

PUBLICATION

Audience

All teachers saw making pupils aware of the audience for whom they were writing as an important part of clarifying their ideas as well as to give purpose to their writing. From the middle school on, pupils were expected to be 'audience-specific' in their selection of topics, form and style. While every effort was made to gain a wide range of readers for pupils' writing, all teachers recognised that the children themselves were the most responsive and appreciative audience for children's writing.

Sharing

Throughout the primary classes, various kinds of sharing occurred with the aim of gaining feedback for the writer. This was done in a variety of ways: while engaged in drafting or preparing for publication, pupils often exchanged comments and writing with each other; during group conferences, ideas and reactions would be shared by pupils in order to obtain help or simply to indicate to the rest of the class what they were up to; in the daily sharing session, those who wished could read aloud their selected stories or parts of stories, whether in draft or published form, to the rest of the class.

Editing

Writing was understood to have two forms: draft and display (or published). Editing the draft was regarded as essential for publication because published writing, with its important public role, is expected to have a clear meaning, hence the importance of accurate use of language conventions. All teachers left the decision to publish to the child, although all encouraged pupils by suggesting publication as a way of responding to the child's draft. In the junior classes, the editing task was seen to be the responsibility of the teacher. In the middle school, before a piece of writing was presented to the teacher for publication, the pupil was expected to have gone through several stages of checking the copy: self-editing, peer-editing, conferencing with the teacher and sometimes the

production of a second draft, in order to remove as many errors as possible. The teacher's role was to prepare as near perfect a version of the text as possible for the intended audience, while at the same time ensuring that the pupil's voice in the writing was preserved. In the intermediate classes, final editing was still seen as the teacher's responsibility, although in two classes, peer editors appointed by the teacher were available to help with final presentation, according to criteria set by the teacher.

Publication

At all levels many formats were used for publication: class journals, individual booklets, scrapbooks, placard presentations, charts and posters, cartoons, loose paper, mobiles, wall displays, writing folders, handmade books, projects, big books, cards, magazines and newspapers. Pupils were encouraged to consider presentation carefully to match the purpose and the intended audience of the piece of writing. Illustrations were regarded as important.

In the junior classes, although publication was often done by the teacher, in the middle school and intermediate classes, the pupils themselves generally took responsibility for the publication of their own writing.

EVALUATION

Objectives

In general, the evaluation of pupils' writing was considered an integral component of the writing process. In the junior classes, its main purpose at the drafting stage was to assist in clarifying the message, purpose, audience and form of the writing, while at the pre-publication stage its function was to enable children to take responsibility for their writing through proofreading, and to foster skills of commenting on the writing of their peers.

In the middle school, two things were taken into account in evaluating pupils' writing: firstly, the objectives set for specific tasks and, secondly, the objectives set for individual pupils. In all the classes observed, clear criteria were established for each writing task by the teacher or, sometimes, through discussion with the pupil. Any evaluation of the pupils' writing took into account personal objectives for each pupil, depending upon their abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and where they happened to be in their writing development.

Among the teachers observed at the intermediate level, there appeared to be three approaches used in evaluating writing:

1. In two schools, assessment or evaluation was oral, and generally took place in conference time. In one class, objectives were set to meet individual needs, while in the other the objectives related to the teacher's overall aim to develop skills which would enable the pupils to express themselves adequately, to think clearly and to communicate effectively.
2. In the school in which the Form Two class was part of a secondary school, the guidelines used were those set out in the English Scheme, which suggested that any criteria chosen in relation to particular tasks needed to be explained to the pupils beforehand, to be kept to a minimum and to cover different skills.

3. The other two schools, both intermediates, had well-developed policies for evaluating pupils' writing. Specific objectives were set for each piece of teacher-initiated writing and were used as the basis for assessment, along with clarity, sequence and presentation. The pupils knew the purpose and the procedure for assessment and were frequently involved in determining the criteria on which the writing would be assessed. Assessment was seen as an integral part of the learning process, not as something appended to it, and any grades or numbers used had the meaning attached to them clearly explained.

Feedback

Pupils were encouraged to give oral feedback to their peers and, in most classes observed, whether in structured or informal arrangements, did so frequently and positively to ideas, drafts and published writing. Constant oral feedback, through questioning and dialogue, was also provided by each teacher at all stages of the writing process during roving and individual conferences and couched in personal, positive terms even if corrective. On-the-spot oral comment was considered especially important in working with Maori and Pacific Islands pupils and those for whom writing was difficult, as a means of fostering confidence and providing a broader language base.

While in the junior classes written feedback by the pupils was not used at the drafting stage, in one or two classes responses to the teacher's written comments were made, and it was fairly common for published work to receive written comments from pupils via a piece of paper next to the displayed work. Similarly, in the middle school, pupils found it difficult to write comments to other pupils, although in one class pupils were beginning to give written feedback to the teacher's comments on the draft. In three of the classes at intermediate level, pupils were encouraged to make written evaluations of each other's writing, using the same criteria as those of the teacher for commenting on published writing or, in one case, affirmative comments on a draft after the completion of a buddy conference.

In the junior classes, teachers rarely wrote comments on drafts, apart from an encouraging remark at the end. Similarly, on published work, any comments that were made were reader's comments of an appreciative nature. Marks or grades were never assigned or used in these junior classes. Teachers' practice in the middle school differed little from that observed at the junior level. However, one teacher provided a special space for comments at the back of each booklet

written by a child, for other pupils, parents, or teachers to make a comment. Apart from the teacher who gave marks out of 20, for each of creativity and presentation, for some project-type activity, none of the teachers awarded marks to pupils' writing. Neither were grades used, apart from one class where an overall impression grade was assigned for the principal's assessment. In most classes, at the intermediate level, written feedback was rarely given, unless requested by the pupils; instead, drafts were more likely to be marked for errors in conventions such as grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers in two classes, however, often wrote comments on pupils' drafts, providing suggestions or challenging comments and asking questions.

In the intermediate classes, practices varied with respect to the use of marks or grades. One teacher rarely used marks or grades, considering them to be inappropriate, particularly for children with special needs. Another did not use grades or marks for 'conference writing' but occasionally gave a mark out of 10 for presentation or factual writing. Another occasionally gave marks out of 10 and used the grades A to D, on finished writing, although always accompanied by a comment. Two others used grades or marks for published writing but always for specific objectives discussed beforehand and never in isolation from comments.

Checklists and records

Checklists of various kinds were used by each teacher observed in junior classes. They were simple and designed to give confidence to the pupil, e.g., 'I can/I am beginning to/I am able to' use capitals, fullstops, etc. Sometimes the pupil was given an opportunity to fill these in. In the middle school the approach to checklists varied. Three teachers used checklists as an aid, a support for pupils in evaluating their own work and to note their mastery of the skills and conventions of writing. At the intermediate level, all five teachers used task-specific checklists, designed to help pupils, particularly in relation to thematic/unit/project type writing. At this stage of their development, checklists were seen as guides to the pupil for keeping the writing on target rather than as checklists for measuring pupil progress.

In the junior classes the records maintained included the checklists mentioned previously, and often a conference journal was kept in which details of each child's individual conference were recorded: date, topic, strengths and weaknesses noted in the writing, and next topic to be undertaken. At the middle school level, four of the teachers kept ongoing records of various kinds, e.g., running logbooks, or personal files, particularly to record comments made

in conferences which could be used as a basis for progress reports given to parents/carers, once a term or, in one case, monthly. One teacher who did not keep such detailed records felt that her knowledge of the pupils' writing, through close, daily contact, removed the need for notes; the pupils' achievements were reviewed every term, however. Running records were maintained by all the teachers at the intermediate level for each child, with notes made on aspects covered in conferences. Generally these 'profiles' of student progress included individually-based comments rather than comparative ones. Reports to parents were descriptive, focussing on what the pupils could do rather than what they could not do.

INTERVENTION AND ASSESSMENT

General principles

All the teachers observed in the primary classes preferred to see themselves as facilitators rather than as interventionists. Although support could be offered at any time, depending on individual needs, the most likely time for giving help was when a child seemed to be in difficulty, or during conferencing time in discussion with the child. One teacher in the middle school saw his involvement to be most likely at the end of the writing process, since the pupils themselves, with peer assistance occasionally, largely managed their own writing prior to the pre-publication stage. All teachers at the intermediate level considered the individual conference to be the time when most teaching was done. At this stage individual needs were targeted and the assistance offered focussed upon clarifying ideas and intentions, language usage, and the diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses, with suggestions for improvement when appropriate or discussion of future writing.

Spelling

In the junior classes, 'attempted/approximated/invented' spelling was encouraged. However, publication requires correct spelling, and during conferences attempted spelling not already corrected by the child through use of the dictionary was corrected on the draft and added to the child's personal spelling list. At the middle school level, while 'attempted' or 'invented' spelling was still encouraged at the drafting stage in order not to impede the flow of ideas, children were expected to proofread their writing, using a dictionary to check their own and others' problem words. For bilingual pupils the words misspelt were written out, but with other more competent writers, various marking codes were often used. For published writing, spelling was expected to be correct, and in pre-publication conferences the teacher's role was to edit carefully line by line; hence the responsibility for checking errors belonged to the teacher at this stage. Classroom practice at the intermediate level differed little from that observed in the middle school. However, many of the more competent writers experienced few problems with spelling.

Punctuation

The teachers of junior classes used modelling procedures to draw pupils' attention to the role of punctuation in clarifying meaning. Conferences were another opportunity to alter punctuation if necessary, once the writer had read the text aloud to determine where the natural breaks came and where punctuation might be needed. The child's readiness was also considered in going over pupils' drafts. In the middle school classes pupils were expected to adhere to the conventions of punctuation, and to check punctuation at the same time as they checked other aspects of their writing. Irregularities in punctuation were noted during conferencing. Modelling was also used, and in whole class language lessons, punctuation conventions would occasionally be the focus. Published writing was expected to be free of punctuation errors. Again, classroom practice at the intermediate level, as it related to punctuation, was similar to that observed in the middle school.

Grammar

At all levels, the basic emphasis with grammar, as with spelling and punctuation, was in response to individual need in the individual conference. All teachers believed that over-insistence on correct grammar can become destructive of the child's cultural voice and that drawing attention to it requires great sensitivity, particularly for children for whom English is a second language. At the junior level, none of the teachers taught grammar in the formal sense, but in discussing their writing with pupils, the question was often asked, 'Does that sound right?'. In the middle school, specific grammar teaching was occasionally conducted, but outside writing times. At the intermediate level, in most classes, as with punctuation, occasional sessions were taken with the class as a whole or smaller groups covering grammar topics, and in one class 'grammar skills sheets' were used. Most teachers appeared to be concerned to a certain extent about grammar but believed that teaching it in isolation seemed to have little effect upon children's mastery of it in their writing.

Voice and ownership

Each teacher was aware of the need to preserve the individual voice of the pupils, with writing seen as a means for them to convey personal ideas and their own experience in their own style. All teachers acknowledged and respected the point of view of each child in their class, irrespective of cultural background. In the junior classes, the writing programmes adopted and the teachers' acceptance of what each child had to offer, indicated the importance attached to the unique

voice of each pupil. In the middle school, one of the teachers did not model principally in order to curtail imitation and loss of voice. In general, the teachers agreed that any intervention needed to be discreet and sensitive, and that the voice of the oral tradition to which some pupils belonged needed opportunities to come through in their writing.

Generally, the classroom practices followed in each class reinforced the view that any writing done belonged to the 'author', from free choice of topic, to choice of ideas conveyed, to choosing the focus of the individual conference, to electing to share with the class or a group or not at all, to deciding whether to publish or not. One teacher at the middle school level, considered that self-evaluation and self-proofreading enhanced ownership; another was of the view that allowing readers to make comments on other pupils' published writing, as well as the display of writing, reinforced ownership; another was concerned that too much scene-setting or teacher-directed brainstorming could unduly influence the pupils' ideas or approach to a topic. Sharing of pupils' writing was only done with the consent of the writer. At the intermediate level, in most classes, particularly for discussing drafts, the decision about when to confer with the teacher was left up to the individual, and conferencing was done in such a way that pupils were not forced to change what they had written, but rather were invited to consider other possibilities and to accept or discard them as they wished.

PART TWO: SECONDARY SCHOOLS

TEACHERS' VIEWS OF AND APPROACHES TO WRITING

While, in theory, writing is considered an integral part of learning and teaching, in the practice of most secondary schools, the teaching of writing is seen to be the responsibility of the English teacher. At the same time the English teacher has to ensure that the requirements of the **Statement of Aims**, the official syllabus for the teaching of English in New Zealand schools, are implemented in the classroom, and while writing has a high priority in the statement, it is just one of the many aspects of literature and language that have to be covered in the English programme.

All the Form Four teachers observed in their classrooms agreed that writing played a large part in their overall English programme. Writing to 'convey personal experiences' or 'to discover/generate new ideas' were regarded as its most important uses, although writing 'for oneself' and writing 'to provide an aesthetic experience' also featured frequently in their programmes. One teacher drew attention to the significance of writing for a later career, while another, although rating literacy highly, accorded oracy priority. Likewise each of the sixth form teachers, regardless of the particular course taught, placed writing high on their list of important activities in the English classroom.

Whether deliberately following a Gravesian approach or not, all fourth form teachers saw writing as involving a sequence of activities including pre-writing, sustained silent writing or drafting, proofreading, conferencing, sharing and publication. Other practices mentioned, though not necessarily acknowledged by all the teachers, included modelling, the use of writing folders, ownership, and cultural appropriateness. Some teachers placed more emphasis on the stages of writing and appropriate teaching strategies outlined by Graves, while others, although agreeing in theory with the principles

governing writing as a process, were more traditional in their teaching. At the sixth form level the teachers observed followed a variety of effective practices for teaching writing, including: clearly outlined objectives concerning specific writing tasks, such as genre, register, audience, and criteria; the use of individual conferencing techniques; constant positive feedback; the use of written responses to students' writing; negotiating assessment criteria with the students before they began writing; the use of models, including visits from professional writers.

All teachers saw the strengths of the writing process to be its emphasis upon: the individual writer's development; allowing students to focus on their experiences and interests; the teacher's role as an affirmer, supporter and facilitator of the student's writing; teaching within the context of the student's own writing through conferencing; sharing writing with others and publishing which reinforce ownership, self-identity and pride.

Among the concerns expressed by both fourth and sixth form teachers was the fact that school policies and the organisation of secondary schools, in general, did not facilitate the development of writing because of the emphasis placed on product and performance; formal methods of assessment and grading, as well as the pressures of examinations, were not considered conducive to process-orientated teaching styles, particularly when applied to creative or personal writing. Other concerns included: the lack of time necessary to conduct conferences, to cover the writing programme and to provide sufficiently comprehensive feedback to students; the danger of over-intrusiveness by the teacher through intervening too soon or by making comments in such a way that the 'ownership' of the students' writing was removed from them; the gap perceived by some students between their actual writing and what they considered to be success in writing; the difficulties experienced in enabling students to translate oral traditions into authentic writing, while at the same time teaching the skills required to write 'occupational' forms of writing clearly and accurately. All teachers were aware of the need for schools to develop 'writing across the curriculum' policies, i.e., to view writing as a schoolwide activity for learning which is the responsibility of all teachers to develop, not just English teachers.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

The five teachers at fourth form level taught in English specialist rooms which were large and airy, often carpeted, with a range of display areas including students' writing and other language-rich visuals. At the sixth form level, classrooms varied in suitability for writing activities. One teacher was peripatetic and commented that, in her opinion, the students' attitude and output seemed to improve when the environment was more pleasant. One of the creative writing teachers worked within an ideal environment, having at his disposal both a large carpeted room and a computer room.

The composition of all fourth form classes was multicultural and varied from genuine mixed-ability groups covering a full range of ability, through to broadbanded groups either in the middle range or towards the top end of ability. In-class groups were usually pupil-selected, but non-sexist groups were encouraged in the co-educational classrooms, and teacher-designated groups were occasionally used in some classes. Sixth form classes were of mixed ability, reflecting choice of subject options. The students taking the creative writing options took English as well, and in one school had been carefully screened before being allowed to take the course.

Relationships between the students and the teachers were excellent in each class for traits such as: encouragement and interest shown by the teacher; individual attention provided; letting students get on with their work; interesting assignments; the teachers' respect for their pupils; the skills taught.

At the fourth form level, relationships between the students varied. In one of the co-educational schools, students worked co-operatively in both group and partner situations, while in another some students worked well and others did not. In the girls' schools, in one case the students shared ideas, drafts and proofreading although a small number preferred to work

largely independently, and in the other, students preferred to work in culturally similar groups. In the boys' school, pupils worked seriously, respecting each other's comments, listening attentively and keeping on task at all times. Among students at the sixth form level, relationships varied from one class where everyone seemed very supportive of each other, to others where students tended to work alone a great deal and rarely worked in groups. Some students appeared to enjoy providing feedback, while others were less keen, preferring whole class activities or individual writing.

THE WRITING PROCESS

Objectives

Objectives for writing featured in all English schemes, and at the fourth form level, generally stressed practice in writing in a variety of styles. Process writing approaches were recognised as valuable, and many of the objectives in these schemes could be achieved by following such approaches. Nonetheless, although all the teachers observed in their classrooms recognised the need to enable students to experience pride in their own creative achievements, to draw on their personal experience as a basis for writing, to value the process as much as the final product, and to confer about writing, and for teachers to lead into writing tasks, to realize the personal nature of writing, to focus writing tasks, to give students the tools to assess and improve their own writing, to provide positive feedback and display writing, and to respect students' ownership of the writing, nonetheless, theirs was a personal approach. There was no guarantee to the students of consistency and continuity in the approaches towards the teaching of writing as they moved from class to class and from teacher to teacher.

In the Sixth Form Certificate English classes, objectives for the teaching of writing were very broad; stated objectives tended to follow either the National Course (old University Entrance English prescription), with some school-set parameters concerning the amount of writing required in different genres, or the departmentally approved local course for English, again with broad objectives, refined in more detail by specific objectives. In the Creative Writing classes, a number of similar specific objectives were set within the context of providing a course suitable for students having an interest in writing and wanting to learn about writing through practical experimentation, reading and discussion.

Ideas and topics

At the fourth form level, comparatively little writing was done which pupils had chosen entirely of their own free choice although, in one school, pupils were encouraged to make a list of their own ideas and chose their own topics for creative or personal writing which alternated with teacher-set unit writing. Much of the writing done in class involved a response to literature, and generally teachers tried a variety of approaches in order to tap different kinds of ideas: e.g., diaries, journals, and interviews, in order to 'get inside' a novel or play. Within these assignments set by the teacher, students often had choices among topics, or could choose their own way of handling a particular topic.

In the Sixth Form English courses topics were largely a reflection of the syllabus requirements relating to literature and language. Specific tasks chosen by the teachers, however, generally echoed students' interests, cultural preferences and strengths, and included a wide range of essay topics supported by prior discussion of ideas and suggestions to assist in motivating the students to write. In one school, a Writing Workshop was part of the Syllabus. In the Creative Writing classes, two categories of writing were covered: exercises - teacher-selected and compulsory, with choices; and personal writing with topics and style chosen by the student. In one class, students also kept a journal, the content and style of which was left to the student.

Pre-writing activities

All teachers observed in the secondary school classes recognised the importance of activities designed to assist students in beginning writing tasks, whether literature based or more personalised, partly to build confidence and knowledge by providing some ideas and vocabulary, partly to provide a useful structure for the writing to follow, and partly to demonstrate the usefulness of planning and organisation in 'managing' writing. Techniques used were generally oral. At the fourth form, these included discussion, models from published writers, newspapers or journals and students' own writing, brainstorming, teacher-directed 'recall of experience' or exploration of a theme, and listing ideas or vocabulary or 'starters', undertaken in whole class, small group or partner situations. In the Sixth Form Certificate English classes, whole class discussion was considered essential in defining topics, exploring the requirements of different genres and in providing ideas and possible approaches. In the Creative Writing classes, each exercise was thoroughly discussed with helpful guidelines provided by the teacher.

Modelling

All the teachers, whether at the fourth form level, or teaching Sixth Form Certificate English or Creative Writing, used models of various kinds in order to demonstrate writing, using extracts from published writers and other students' writing. At the fourth form level, two teachers frequently wrote with the students, believing that by demonstrating the difficulty of writing and reinforcing the principle of quietness while writing, they were demystifying the act of writing. Those who did not model still assisted, on an individual basis, students who were having difficulties and occasionally wrote with them. In the sixth form, teachers occasionally read out something they had written themselves, and some teachers wrote in class while the students were writing, although as a kind of sharing activity rather than in order to illustrate composing techniques.

Drafting

Both fourth and sixth form teachers saw drafting as the foundation of writing. The draft was considered as a starting point, or an exploration of ideas without final commitment, which could be used as a basis for subsequent shaping. While all recognised the importance of silence and personal space at the drafting stage of writing, they were always ready to assist those who needed help in getting started. At both levels, the teachers with several Maori and Pacific Islands students in their classes, observed that the writing of these students appeared to differ from that of others and stressed the need for teacher-sensitivity to that difference. The Creative Writing teachers had similar views about the importance of drafting, although one preferred to refrain from commenting on students' writing until the later stages of the draft so that students were more certain about what had been written, and less likely to alter the text in response to the teacher's remarks. In contrast, the other teacher thought that comments and suggestions made during drafting were the most effective ways of improving the writing.

Proofreading

Proofreading was considered to be an integral part of the writing process at the fourth form level. In four of the classes observed, students generally carried out proofreading carefully, both individually and with a partner, with dictionaries and a thesaurus often consulted. In the fifth class, despite a high degree of teacher support, students found proofreading difficult and needed constant reminders to carry it out, or simply could not be bothered doing it. In three classes, proofreading became more like redrafting or sub-editing, with many students who were already spelling and punctuating

reasonably well, actually altering their drafts after assessing the relevance and audience interest of their ideas in relation to the topic. In the predominantly multicultural class, the teacher commented that bicultural students tended to become dispirited and discouraged when they discovered mistakes. Most of the teachers at the sixth form level did not consider proofreading to be a problem and thought that the chief responsibility for it lay with the students themselves. However, the Sixth Form Certificate English teachers helped students who were having difficulties with proofreading, and students often helped each other with spelling and punctuation.

CONFERENCING TECHNIQUES

As in the primary school, four kinds of conferencing were observed: roving conferences, group conferences, peer conferences, and individual conferences.

Roving conferences

All the secondary teachers observed during the writing component of English classes used roving conferences to monitor writing in progress, either when a student specifically requested help or when the teacher perceived that a student needed assistance. They were carried out in a non-intrusive manner, and generally focussed upon ideas, positive reinforcement or help in getting started. In the fourth form and sixth form classes consisting mostly of Māori and Pacific Islands students, the roving conference was the most frequently used teacher-based conference; the dialogue with a student was personal to the writer, but audible to the rest of the class so that all students could share in each other's learning. Both teachers felt that these students preferred the openness of this approach to the relative isolation of a private one-to-one conference with the teacher. In the Creative Writing classes, the roving conference was used to help keep writing going, with occasional encouragement or supportive comment rather than involvement with detail.

Group conferences

In some classes at fourth form level, students worked together in groups, e.g., on the basis of cultural identity, or occasionally conferenced in groups to share ideas, in which case the teacher would listen but not take an active role. Otherwise, apart from one class, when a group conference was occasionally held to address a problem common to the group, the only time that group conferences took place was when groups of students were working together on a joint project involving writing. In the Sixth Form Certificate English classes, groups were sometimes used at the initial stages to ensure that all students, particularly the less articulate and confident, gained sufficient

ideas and vocabulary to carry out a task, or as part of the Writing Workshop when a teacher-set task required a group approach as an integral part of the writing. In the Creative Writing classes, group conferences were not promoted as part of the course.

Peer conferences

In all classes at fourth form level, peer conferencing was encouraged and practised. Although such conferences could occur at any stage, they were most likely when sharing ideas at the beginning of writing, or when drafts had been completed for proofreading and testing audience response.

In one class, peer conferences were sometimes teacher-directed, but more often they arose spontaneously as an inherent component of writing; in other classes, guidelines were given by the teacher for conducting peer conferences, and they tended to be modelled on the teacher's individual conference. At the sixth form level, whether in the Sixth Form Certificate or Creative Writing classes, peer conferences were not organised but tended to happen spontaneously.

Individual conferences

Individual conferences were used in four of the five fourth form classes. The individual conference was regarded as a collaborative effort, undertaken prior to assessment on a voluntary basis with the teacher acting as an adviser, facilitator and editor and the student free to accept or decline the advice offered. While all teachers followed fairly similar approaches to conferencing, all adapted the conference to the needs of individual students. With less competent and diffident students the conference focussed on creating a satisfactory draft in collaboration with the student; with more able writers, the teachers concentrated on questions related to choice of ideas, inappropriate use of language, poor sentences, and order and sequencing of paragraphs, but always in a way which respected the student's voice and ownership of the writing and left the responsibility for the final text with the student.

The practices used in the sixth form English classes were similar, except that in the class with several Maori and Pacific Islands students, the student being conferenced was not separated from the rest of the class, and both the oral and written feedback given related to specific objectives; although surface mistakes were always noted, the emphasis was on the strengths evident in the student's writing. In one Creative Writing class, conferencing of the first draft included discussion of what worked in the writing, and ways

in which it could be improved; if the student did not respond positively to the teacher's comments, he withdrew, though still maintaining interest and support. At the final stage, the individual conference became more exacting with the teacher making editorial changes when considered necessary, although the decision concerning acceptance of these still rested with the teacher. In the other class, the teacher first read the draft or submitted segment and made comments on a separate piece of paper; these comments were then given to the student so that any changes could be made or reflected upon before the individual conference took place. At the editing stage, teacher and student worked collaboratively on the writing, but again, final decisions were the responsibility of the writer.

PUBLICATION

Audience

Writing for an audience of real readers, not just the teacher as evaluator, was viewed as essential by all teachers, who tended to see themselves more as readers of the students' writing than as critics. Readers of the writing, apart from the classroom teacher and other students, were other classes, other teachers, sometimes parents, readers of the school magazine and local newspapers.

Sharing

In all classes at fourth form level, the sharing of writing at all stages of the process was regarded as essential and an integral part of the act of writing. Students frequently shared their writing in most classes, offering constructive comment to each other, and the environment created in most classes was conducive to discussion of writing, and the provision of sharing. While students shared their writing at sixth form level, the sharing was frequently of an informal and private nature.

Editing

All fourth form teachers agreed that 'published' writing should be polished and edited so that errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and sentence usage were eliminated from the student's text, and saw themselves as the final editors. Time and classroom pressure, however, often precluded teachers from reaching a point where all the writing done was error-free, although items selected for publication, especially in competitions or for school magazines, were scrutinised carefully. Two sixth form teachers considered that editing was merely fine-tuning of a student's piece of writing rather than correction of a manuscript, with the decisions in the hands of the student, after consultation. Two other teachers required students to take part in an editing conference before writing was assessed, taking into account the criteria relating to the specific task.

Publication

Publication was considered important by all the teachers, although only if the student in each case approved, and was seen as a source of motivation and a reinforcement of ownership. At the fourth form level formats included good copy, sometimes typed or computer printed, and kept in a folder, posters, collages, newspapers, anthologies, letters, wall displays, booklets, projects, and class books. In the Sixth Form Certificate English classes, writing was kept in folders, and covered several genres, e.g., reviews, poetry, reports, editorials, literacy criticism, short stories and descriptive paragraphs. In the Creative Writing classes, students kept journals, exercises, and a personal anthology in one class, with a selection of students' writing published once a term as Creative Writing; in the other class, students also kept exercises and personal writing from which a folio was compiled for formal assessment, and a class publication was produced, with the selection of the contents being the responsibility of the students.

EVALUATION

Objectives

With one exception, where the school's assessment policies were still being vigorously debated, each school in which fourth form teachers were observed had a comprehensive set of objectives for assessing writing and the criteria were made clear to students. In the Sixth Form Certificate English classes, specific writing activities were formally assessed according to criteria made known to the students with the results assessed as marks or grades and accompanied by a constructive comment. In one school there was no separate weighting for writing, while in the other, the writing segment specifically counted for 25 per cent of the final mark. In the Creative Writing classes, the students' written work was also formally assessed. In one class, discrete weightings were assigned to the journal, the exercises and the personal anthology, and formal assessments of each section were made either twice or three times a year. In the other class, formal assessment was only made at the end of the year when the student's folio was assessed by a team of teachers.

Feedback

In fourth and sixth form English classes, feedback was given by students to each other, both formally and informally, on work in progress, on the draft, and on the final published version of the writing, whether in peer response groups, larger groups or in whole class settings. However, at the fourth form level, comments rarely went beyond proofing and surface questions. In the Creative Writing classes oral feedback on a student-to-student basis was given less frequently. Oral feedback from the teacher, of an encouraging, positive or stimulating nature, was given constantly, throughout the writing process, particularly during individual and roving conferences. Teachers were aware of the need to be sensitive, both of feelings and of cultural background. Creative Writing teachers built upon the students' individual writing in their teaching and guidance, and particularly with expository forms of writing spent a lot of time in discussion and oral feedback.

Students overall were reluctant to make written comments on each other's writing, unless as part of a group writing activity, although many did write evaluations of their own writing or responded to their teacher's comments.

At fourth form level, the teachers tended to make few written comments on students' drafts, apart from occasional corrections or specific feedback relating to the objectives of the task. With completed or published writing, some teachers always gave a written comment on the piece itself, accompanied by a grade, while others wrote on a separate sheet of paper which might be displayed next to the published piece and did not use grades; some provided only 'responsive' comments, i.e., a reader's reaction, without a grade. In the Sixth Form Certificate English classes, written comments were made on drafts by the teachers. In the Creative Writing classes, one teacher focussed upon phrases, sentences, or a particular section or the register used but preferred oral feedback to extensive written comments, although at the editing stage written feedback was more directive and specific. The other teacher provided written feedback in the form of questions, suggestions for clarification, organisation, amplification and paring, and focussed upon specific sections of a piece of writing that were promising or needed reworking; this written feedback was only supplied once the student felt ready to receive it and was written on a separate piece of paper. Published writing was very rarely written on by any teacher. In all cases, the marks and grades were awarded for the purpose of the Sixth Form Certificate. Generally, the teachers at this level did not feel comfortable with the practice of assigning performance indicators but adhered to school policy and assessment requirements.

Checklist and records

Checklists were not used, but teachers at both fourth and sixth form levels generally gave students clear guidelines and specific criteria for each writing task. These were discussed with the students before they began writing and often reinforced during the writing process through oral feedback.

At the fourth form level individual profiles, folios or logs were maintained by each teacher on every student, and systematically updated. They were generally designed to be cumulative records of individual writing development, and could be inspected by the student on request.

INTERVENTION AND ASSISTANCE

General principles

Assistance was given to students by fourth form teachers at several stages of the writing process, particularly at the beginning of a writing task, during the act of writing and after a draft had been prepared. Mostly such assistance was oral in nature, although occasionally, written comments were made. While for Maori and Pacific Islands students, as well as ESL and less competent writers, assistance in the early stages of writing was considered important, for more competent and confident writers, individual conferences were the main means of providing personal assistance, with the kind of help being determined by the needs of each student. Generally, any assistance given was couched in positive, encouraging terms, was non-intrusive and culturally sensitive, and reflected individual needs. Practices in the Sixth Form Certificate English classes were very similar to those used by the fourth form teachers, except that one teacher avoided giving help during drafting, unless it was specifically requested. The Creative Writing teachers differed in their emphases. One teacher gave significant input at the beginning of a writing activity and provided assistance subsequently when students needed it, generally allowing students to take the initiative. The other teacher also adapted his approach to students' individual needs, but preferred to provide assistance when students had produced an adequate draft.

Spelling

Generally, at fourth form level, students were encouraged to write their drafts without worrying too much about spelling in order to get their ideas down on paper. After completing their drafts, students were expected to check their spelling using dictionaries or the help of peers. Spelling was normally dealt with in the context of the students' own writing. Final copies or published writing were expected to be correctly spelt.

Punctuation

In all classes punctuation was treated in the same way as spelling, generally within the context of the students' own writing. Its importance was emphasised as a clarifier of meaning. Most fourth form teachers, however, gave students who had weaknesses in this area periodic exercises or drills, or conducted lessons on punctuation with the whole class in order to reinforce the main conventions of punctuation.

Grammar

As with spelling and punctuation, so with grammar. Teaching in context was favoured, although at the fourth form level, teachers took an occasional lesson involving the whole class focussing upon a common group of mistake. At the sixth form level each teacher saw correct grammar as an essential component of clear thought, respect for the audience and appropriate style, but again, generally treated grammatical problems within the context of the writing.

Voice and ownership

All the teachers were concerned to encourage the voice of the individual student and to foster personal ownership of the writing. Generally such beliefs were reinforced by allowing students to make their own decisions about conferencing, final editing and publishing, as well as topic choice within certain parameters, i.e., the syllabus and range of topics set by the teacher. It was considered important to develop an atmosphere of trust and relaxation in the classroom so that students could feel free to say what they liked, and so that Maori and Pacific Islands students in particular would be able to follow their own writing styles in developing their cultural and personal voices.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSIONS

In general, the primary teachers observed share many of the same teaching strategies, and tend to respond in a uniformly positive way to their pupils' writing. Differences are stronger at the Form Two level, however, and despite the common patterns observed among the Form Four and Six teachers, greater variation between teachers is apparent at the secondary level. Given that the study ranged across levels from Standard One to Form Six it is, perhaps, not an unsurprising finding that variations exist; what is surprising is the degree of similarity in emphasis shared by all the teachers in their ways of responding to their pupils' writing. These have been explored in detail in the previous chapter.

Further research, however, is needed on the problems that occur in relation to the teaching and learning of writing when pupils transfer from teacher to teacher, from class to class, from school to school and from one sector of the education system to another, e.g., timetabling, fragmentation of the curriculum, examination pressures and inconsistency in teacher expectations of pupils' writing. These problems are exacerbated by the transfer from primary or intermediate schools, where the writing process is understood not only as an internal part of the total language programme, but also as a learning process with implications for all areas of the curriculum, to the secondary system, where writing becomes more closely associated with English as a subject and is identified as the responsibility of the English teacher, and where teachers in other areas of the curriculum do not see the development of pupils' writing processes and competencies as their particular responsibility.

Pupils need opportunities to express their individuality and voice. A second key area where further research is required is the loss of cultural identity and voice, particularly in the writing of Maori pupils, Pacific Islands pupils and others whose cultural heritage emphasizes the importance of oral language

and symbolic behaviour in the communication of knowledge and experience. What techniques, what understandings are required for teachers to preserve the unique cultural perspective of each of their pupils?

According to Freedman¹. 'successful response is guided by a strong and consistent philosophy of teaching writing' which can be articulated to other teachers, school administrators, parents and students. A third area of research which requires further support, therefore, is the most appropriate ways to assist teachers to develop philosophies for the teaching of writing, such as the principles underlying the Writing Projects in the United States. Resources for the teaching, learning and evaluation of writing need to be developed in New Zealand which will assist teachers in becoming fully aware of the implications of recent research on the composing process and the development of writing.

Other vital areas of research which this report has not been able to investigate in detail, but which would yield findings of importance for all teachers of writing include:

- an examination of the types of comments teachers make at different stages of the writing process, to determine which kinds of feedback are most helpful for learners;
- an appraisal of the effects of different kinds of peer response on pupils' writing at different ages;
- studies covering a longer span of time which focus upon the writing process of individual students, as well as the techniques applied by teachers, e.g., a longitudinal study of writing development.

As Freedman (p.152) states, writing can be interpreted as a problem-solving process with skills transferable from one writing task to another:

Response aims to help students learn to solve the problems they face as writers - both the cognitive problems (getting ideas) and the social problems (learning to write in particular contexts). The writing process is not just a set of procedures - prewriting, writing, revising; rather, it is a problem-solving process, both cognitive and social.

We need further research on the strategies successful teachers use in their classrooms to help pupils apply writing skills to new tasks. In short, more emphasis is required on the role of writing for learning, and for equipping pupils to take a full part in the particular culture to which they choose to belong. Such a change of focus will have major implications for the ways writing is assessed in schools, as Freedman (p.16) suggests:

Radical reorganisation of classrooms will be needed in order to make **writing** and **learning** more important or even as important as **grading** from the students' point of view.

From the research reported in this study, it is clear that primary teachers and pupils are beginning to make this change, but secondary teachers and students are still dominated by the constraints of the examination system and the pressures of a competitive society.

Among other things, this research study has shown that it is time for a stronger emphasis upon writing across the curriculum, and as a consequence for teacher training courses to give more attention to the valuable role that writing plays in learning, irrespective of the subject-areas involved. Assessment practices adopted in schools need to take into account the needs of learners, and to move away from the view that the teacher is the main arbiter of notions of correctness, particularly when prescriptive views intrude upon the development of pupils' writing and learning skills. A co-ordinated national policy of writing is absolutely essential if issues such as these are to be properly addressed in the near future. Also, any resources developed for teachers of writing can build on the data gathered for this and other studies carried out recently.

Finally, teachers of writing, through their responses to what their pupils write, convey many values: these need to be examined carefully so that the needs of learners take first place if writing is to serve as a form of empowerment, and not merely as an indicator of achievement.

Reference

1. Freedman, S.W. **Response to Student Writing**, Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1987.

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WRITING RESEARCH PROJECT (1988)

Interview Questions

1. As a teacher of English, what place does writing have in your total programme?
 - * What proportion of time do you allow for writing compared to other activities?
 - * What is your role in developing your students' writing ability/fluency?
 - * How do most of your students' view writing?
2. How do you go about teaching writing in your class at the level?
 - * What types of writing activities do you emphasize?
 - * How much in-course time do you spend on preparing the class for writing?
 - * ... on encouraging students to discuss 'assigned' tasks/'own' tasks?
 - * ... on actual writing?
 - * How do you help your pupils become aware of the features of various types of writing (e.g. through stating actual features, or through discussion of examples/traits)?
3. Please describe a 'typical' writing lesson in your classroom.
 - * What was the most rewarding writing activity you have taught/covered so far this year?
4. Do your pupils ever ask for any reasons why they have certain written tasks?
 - * If so, what reasons do you offer them?
(e.g. because you have to do it,
it's important to develop specific skills
writing will help you to learn to think more clearly
writing will help you to learn material
to improve your ability to express yourself
to be able to write accurately, etc.)
5. Where do you get your ideas from for teaching writing/for new activities to try out, etc.?
 - * From other teachers? from courses? from in-service days?
... own reading (for example)?
... previous year's work?
6. Do you write yourself?
 - * What types?
 - * How often?
 - * Have you ever submitted anything for publication?

Do you write in class with your pupils
How often?
Any particular kinds?
7. At what points in the writing process do you consider your involvement (intervention? interaction?) to be most appropriate/helpful for your pupils?
 - * Do you help with ideas?
... organization/structure?
... language accuracy?
... style?
... layout/presentation?

8. How do you interact with your pupils when they are writing?
 - * When do you interact?
 - * How often ...
 - * Do you tend to interact with individuals or with groups? Is group participation required? Is it evaluated?
 - * How are your groups structured (e.g., peer partners, ongoing groups of some pupils)?
 - * How are individual conferences structured?
9. What opportunities do your pupils have to confer with each other about their written work?
 - * In what circumstances? (At what stage of the writing process?)
 - * 1:1 or small groups?
 - * During class or out of class?
 - * During formal (structured) times or only as the need arises?
10. Who reads your pupils' writing?
 - * Do you read all your pupils' writing?
 - * Teacher/other pupils/other classes/parents?
 - * What opportunities do you provide for publishing?
 - * Is pupils' writing displayed?
 - * Do you have a class library with pupils' own writing included?
11. Do your pupils have explicit information on the criteria used for grading/marking?
 - * Do they always know what is required of them concerning a particular assignment/piece?
 - * Is this information written down and made available to each student?
 - * Do you have different criteria for different kinds of writing?
12. When you pupils are engaged in a writing activity do they know how to monitor their own writing process?
 - * Do your pupils revise their writing? (i.e., go through a draft, more than one draft, several drafts), Or does it depend upon the type of writing?
 - * What strategies do they adopt?
 - * Do they have written prompts/guidelines? Or oral reminders?
13. How do you evaluate your pupils' written work?
 - * What techniques do you use?
 - * Do you grade/assign marks/percentages, etc.? What proportion of writing is marked?
 - * Do you provide written comments? When? What do these usually refer to?
 - * Do you provide oral feedback? When? What aspects do you tend to refer to?
14. Do pupils ever set their own standards of evaluation for some tasks?
 - * Which ones?
 - * How often?

15. Do you make written/oral comments on pieces of writing that are not graded/
marked, etc?
 - * How often?
 - * What kinds?
 - * At what stage of completion (comments made before revision? at end only)?
16. What happens in your class if pupils don't perform well (for whatever reason)?
 - * Do you reteach a lesson?
 - * Do they have a chance to redo their writing?
 - * Are deadlines revised?
 - * Are marks/grades ever changed?
 - * Is extra work provided?
17. Do you teach grammar/usage/accuracy of language, in any fashion?
 - * How?
 - (At what points in the writing process?
 - during writing of drafts?
 - in revision phase(s)?
 - after papers handed in?)
 - * Do you address the whole class, or particular individuals?
 - * How do you deal with pupils who have difficulties in these aspects?
18. What strategies do you adopt to deal with students who dislike writing or
find writing hard/boring, etc.?
19. In your view what are the most important features/characteristics of a good/
effective teacher of writing?
20. Is there anything else you would like to mention about how you teach writing,
or how writing should be taught, or ways of responding to pupils' writing?

RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY TO PUPILS' WRITING : INTERVIEW FOR
SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: _____ M []
F []

School: _____

Class: _____ No. of Pupils: _____

Subject: _____

Area: rural	[]	Type: State	[]
small town	[]	integrated	[]
city	[]	private	[]

Total no. of pupils: _____	co-ed	[]
	single sex	[]

Years of fulltime teaching: _____

Age: below 25	[]	41-45	[]
26-30	[]	46-50	[]
31-35	[]	51-55	[]
36-40	[]	over 55	[]

Undergraduate major: _____

Master's degree: Yes []
No []

Taken part in any courses on writing or the teaching of writing? Yes [] i.e., _____
No [] _____

Prepared to take part if selected? Yes []
No []

Preferred time: second term July []
Aug []
third term Sep []
Oct []
Nov []

WRITING RESEARCH PROJECT (1988)

Questionnaire

I. Types of writing covered in class

In your total writing curriculum for the class you were interviewed about, approximately how much of your focus is on each of the following types of writing? Circle the appropriate number for each question.

N.B. None = 0; A very minor percent = 1; Less than half = 2; About half = 3; More than half = 4.

Writing for oneself (lists, journals, diaries) 0 1 2 3 4

Writing to correspond with others (letters, journals with dialogue) 0 1 2 3 4

Writing to convey personal experiences (non-fiction personal narratives) 0 1 2 3 4

Writing to provide an aesthetic experience (poems, plays, short stories) 0 1 2 3 4

Writing to discover or generate ideas (free writing, logs describing learning) 0 1 2 3 4

Writing to present facts or events (book reports, news reports, short research reports) 0 1 2 3 4

Writing to analyze and synthesize ideas (critical or persuasive prose, literary criticism, longer research papers) 0 1 2 3 4

Other kinds of writing (please specify): _____

How do you normally respond (comment upon, discuss with the student, etc.) to these kinds of writing? And when (during drafts, or only when finished?) _____

When do you differ from these practices? _____

2. Teaching techniques used in class

The following questions concern your teaching techniques in the class you were interviewed about. Again, please circle the appropriate number for each question.

N.B. Almost never = 1; Sometimes = 2; Often = 3; Almost always = 4.

- a. When a topic is introduced, how often is there in-class discussion (whole class, small group, or individual) about it before students begin writing? 1 2 3 4
- b. How often do you use examples of professional writing to help these students improve their writing? 1 2 3 4
- c. For each writing assignment, how often do you try to make these students aware of the audience(s) for whom they are writing? 1 2 3 4
- d. When responding to problems in the writing of these students, how often do you focus on a selected few of their problems? 1 2 3 4
- e. In this class, how often do you use examples of student writing to help these students improve their writing? 1 2 3 4
- f. When students in this class are working on a piece of writing, how often do you have them work in peer response groups? 1 2 3 4
- g. When these students produce rough drafts, how often do they receive written or oral comments on them? 1 2 3 4
- h. How often do you mark every problem or error that you see in a finished piece of the writing of these students? 1 2 3 4
- i. How often do you assign grades to their finished pieces of writing? 1 2 3 4
- j. When responding to the writing of these students, how often do you let them know about both strengths and weaknesses? 1 2 3 4

k. In this class, how often do you give assignments sequenced according to a plan you or other teachers have devised?

1 2 3 4

l. When these students write, how often do you publish their work for class members or for other readers not in this class?

1 2 3 4

m. How often do you have individual conferences (either formal or informal) with these students to discuss their writing?

1 2 3 4

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

School: _____ Date: _____
 Teacher: _____ Level: _____ Time: _____

A. GETTING STARTED

Classroom Organisation _____

Type(s) of Writing _____

Purpose/Objectives _____

Initiating the Writing _____

Stimulation/Motivation _____

Modelling/Examples _____

B. PROCESS OF WRITING

I. Student Activities

II. Teacher's Role (Responding)

Sharing Ideas _____

Drafting _____

Conferencing _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Proofreading/Editing _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Publishing _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

C. ASPECTS OF WRITING EMPHASIZED

Ideas/Content _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Language/Accuracy _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Appropriate/Style _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Organisation _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Strategies _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Other Aspects _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

D. RESPONDING: MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

Monitoring _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Assessment Criteria/Methods _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

STUDENT OBSERVATION RECORD

School: _____ Date: _____
Teacher: _____ Level: _____ Time: _____
Student: _____ Category: _____

A. STRATEGIES ADOPTED

Getting started _____

Interaction with peers _____

Stages followed (process) _____

Interaction with teacher _____

B. WRITTEN WORK (STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES)

Type(s) _____

Ideas/Content _____

Language/Accuracy _____

Appropriateness/Style _____

Organisation _____

Other Aspects _____

C. TEACHER COMMENTS

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

Supplementary Questions

A. GETTING STARTED

Classroom Organization

- (a) how is the class set up for writing activities (e.g., seating arrangements, location of word processor - if available, etc.)
- (b) are there any writing resource materials in the classroom? how accessible are they?
- (c) how available is the teacher to pupils with requests? do pupils go to the teacher, or the teacher to the pupils? how welcoming or responsive is the teacher?
- (d) are pupils able to move freely within the classroom? are there any rules/procedures governing such activity in relation to writing?
- (e) are varied forms of organization used for different kinds of writing?

Type(s) of Writing

- (a) what kinds of writing were observed?
- (b) were all pupils working on the same tasks, or different tasks?
- (c) how much choice of topic was available?

Purpose/Objectives

- (a) why were the kinds of writing observed part of this lesson/unit?
- (b) did the teacher have any specific objectives in mind in setting this writing (or allowing students to choose their own)? how are these objectives to be measured?
- (c) did the teacher explain the purpose of the writing task(s) to the class? how was this done (e.g., were the tasks and requirements carefully outlined, or passed over quickly)?

Initiating the Writing

- (a) how was the writing task introduced?
- (b) were pupils required to have carried out any prior, related activities?

Stimulation/Motivation

- (a) what specific activities were used by the teacher to provoke/incite/encourage pupils to write?
- (b) did any students require additional stimulation/motivation to that provided to the class as a whole? what manner/tone was adopted by the teacher (i.e., how responsive to individual needs)?

Modelling/Examples

- (a) were some aspects of the writing task demonstrated by the teacher? what aspects?
- (b) what methods were used in modelling writing activities/tasks?
- (c) how structured were the methods adopted?
- (d) how responsive was the teacher to the needs of individual pupils?

B. PROCESS OF WRITING**Student Activities**

- (a) what strategies were adopted or practices followed by the pupils when actually engaged in writing at each of the stages listed?
- (b) to what extent - on the whole - did pupils interact with each other concerning different stages of their writing (if at all)?
- (c) about how much time was devoted to each of the stages observed?

Teacher's Role (Responding)

- (a) how did the teacher facilitate the sharing of ideas (if at all)? were pupils divided into groups, or consult as peers, etc.? were any specific procedures followed by the pupils when sharing ideas?
- (b) did the teacher assist any pupils with drafting? how was this done?
- (c) did the teacher assist any pupils on a one-to-one basis once their drafts were completed? how was conferencing organized? how responsive was the teacher to individual needs?
- (d) did the teacher assist any pupils with proofreading/editing? how was this done? how responsive was the teacher to individual needs?
- (e) how was publishing undertaken in the class? what was the teacher's role in this activity?

C. ASPECTS OF WRITING EMPHASIZED

In general, note the extent to which each of these aspects was emphasized by the teacher in giving instructions, in assisting individual pupils, and in commenting upon written products. How responsive was the teacher to individual needs with regard to each aspect (to the extent that this could be determined)? Did the teacher suggest any helpful techniques that the pupils could apply in handling one or more of these aspects in relation to the kind(s) of writing observed?

D. RESPONDING: MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

In general, what techniques of response were used by the teacher in encouraging or facilitating writing in the classroom? How frequent were the monitoring practices observed (if any)? Did pupils feel comfortable with the teacher's monitoring procedures? What specific assessment criteria were adopted by the teacher in relation to each type of writing observed? (Unless this phase of the writing process is observed in class, a subsequent interview may be necessary using specific pieces of writing as a focus.) How did the teacher go about assessing writing in the classroom? What specific methods were used? What kinds and amount of feedback about their writing were supplied to pupils? Was the teacher responsive to individual needs?

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INFORMATION FROM PARTICIPANTS

Apart from the daily observation records, both of the classroom teacher and selected students, further information could be obtained on these matters:

1. Does the school have a policy for the teaching of language/writing? How recently was the policy established, and how is it currently implemented? Is the policy likely to be reviewed in the near future? [Obtain copies of any relevant printed material such as school schemes, policy statements/guidelines, departmental booklets, etc.]
2. Does the school regularly collect and file samples of students' writing? If so, is there a consistent policy, or is it an ad hoc arrangement? [Establish whether the teacher(s) involved would be prepared to be involved in creating a profile of a year's work from selected students.]
3. Is a special focus ever given to writing in the school (e.g., as part of a visit from a writer involved in the Writers in Schools Scheme, visits from local writers through less formal arrangements, taking pupils to hear writers at the local library, or to listen to visiting speakers who are also writers, etc.)? Does the school have any writers on the staff who organize occasional workshops, or encourage individual writers? Is there a writing resource centre in the school, or a writing corner in classroom? Do the students ever take part in writing competitions, or edit a school journal or newspaper on a regular basis? [Describe these events briefly.]
4. What **resources** are used in the school for teaching writing? Are there any? What do the participants in the study consider would be most useful in terms of writing resources required? Have the schools constructed any of their own writing resources? [Obtain relevant comments and materials if available.]
5. What kinds of writing assessment practices are carried out in the school? (Part of the school's language policy?) Do staff meet to discuss the teaching/assessment of written work? Do groups of staff ever meet to discuss the same sets of writing samples and to share criteria? Or are staff left to their own devices in assessing pupils' writing? [Obtain information if available.]
6. Is any information kept in the school (whether by individual teachers or as part of a school language policy) on the **development** of pupils as writers? (Viz. item 2) If so, what kinds of information? How regularly is this done? Do teachers feel that this would be a useful activity to carry out on a regular basis? What kinds of information would they like to see kept? [Obtain staff comment if possible.]

SUMMARY OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION ACCORDING TO RESEARCH DATA-GATHERING STAGE

APPENDIX C

Teacher _____ Level _____ School _____

1 Responding techniques used _____

2 Practices avoided _____

3 Response techniques influential in improving student writing

4 Use of formal assessment _____

5 Points at which assistance is given/intervention made

6 Reasons for using specific strategies

7 Students' views of teacher's behaviour

8 Other comments significant to research

LIST OF TEACHERS OBSERVED

Margaret Adeane, Wellington Girls College
Lyn Armstrong, Dunedin North Intermediate
Richard Brooke, Green Bay High School
Pauline Buchanan, Newton Central School
Rod Davis, Karori West Normal
Linda Duncan, Wellington College
Helen Forest, Karori West Normal
Virginia Frances, Upper Hutt School
Pam Hodder, Raureka School
Keith Hutton, Tahuna Normal Intermediate
Ray Johansen, Karori West Normal
Jane Johnson, Logan Park High School
Janet Kerby, Avondale College
Jennifer Langley, North East Valley High School
Jacqueline Lawton, Richmond Road School
Bill Lennox, Selwyn College
Jo McDonald, Queen Charlotte College
Faye Palmer, South Wellington Intermediate
Gael Richardson, St Thomas's, Kohimarama
Angela Ryan, Rewa Rewa School
Jill Shears, Royal Oak School
Helen Sturm, Auckland Girls Grammar
Steve Tracey, Green Bay High School
Elizabeth Welch, Queen's High School
Mary Zellman, St Dominic's College